

**TOMAHAWKS AND TROPIC LIGHTNING**

***An Infantry Battalion In Vietnam***

**1966-1970**

***Revision Of  
May, 2023***



***“Tropic Lightning  
Ready To Strike  
Anywhere, Anytime”***

***(c) N.R Andrews, Historian  
Member, C/4/23<sup>rd</sup> Inf (Mech) 1965-1967  
On Behalf of All the Men Of 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry -- All rights reserved***

## EDITOR / HISTORIANS COMMENT

I have attempted to find, gather and re-present here a summary of ALL information available bearing directly and indirectly on the 4th Battalion, 23rd Infantry (Mechanized)'s participation in the Vietnam War. These sources were searched: 1) internet-available official after action reports & "lessons learned", for all levels of command, 2) biographies, 3) official & unofficial histories, 4) some morning reports gathered by members from archives and donated to this effort, 5.) Joint Chiefs of Staff Vietnam War History, 6) De-classified National Intelligence Estimates, and . eyewitness EMAILS concerning details and notable memories, written by members of the 4th Bn 23rd Inf (Mech) Association who served in RVN 1966-1970. The last contribution is perhaps the most fragile and the most illuminating. From these sources I copied and pasted as much as possible, slightly editing for comprehension, readability, and "military English" for brevity. The editor / historian is responsible for all errors of copying, omission, commission, and other deficiencies. If any member has more information, or wishes to comment further on anything here, please let me know via the Battalion Facebook site, or the Regimental Journal.

The info out there is enormous and we are 50+ years after the facts. If you have anything to add to the History of the Tomahawks in Vietnam, living and dead, please help.

Neil R. Andrews  
May, 2023

### **SGT, Company C 4th Battalion (Mech)**

Twenty Third Infantry (Tomahawks, We Serve)  
Twenty Fifth Infantry Division (Tropic Lightning)  
December 1965 thru March, 1967



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## **Abbreviations used in the text.**

Abn - airborne  
ACR – Armored Cavalry Regiment  
AO – Area of Operations  
APC – Armored Personnel Carrier M113 & variants  
AFVN – Armed Forces Viet Nam  
Arc Light – B52 bombing mission in SVN  
Arty – Artillery  
ARVN – Army of Republic of Vietnam, also refers colloquially to a South Vietnamese soldier  
Avn - Aviation  
AW – Automatic Weapons  
Bde – Brigade  
Bn – Battalion  
Btry – Battery of Artillery, about the number of men as in an Infantry Co  
Cav – Cavalry  
CDM – command detonated mine or minefield  
CG - Commanding General  
CHICOM - Lit: “Chinese Communist”; from Red China, Peoples Republic of China, “China”  
CINC - Commander In Chief  
Civ – civilian, civil  
Cmdr - Commander  
Co – Company  
C/O – Commanding Officer  
CONUS – Continental US  
Coord – (grid) coordinates  
COSVN - Central Office South Viet Nam (NLF HQs)  
CP - Command Post  
CRIP – Combined Reconnaissance-Intelligence Platoon  
CSW – Crew served weapons, machine guns, mortars, etc.  
CTZ - Corps Tactical Zone  
DEROS – date of estimated rotation or separation, “when you left RVN”  
DOW – Died Of wounds  
E – East  
Engr - Engineer  
FAC – Forward Air Controller, airborne coordinator for airstrikes & sometimes artillery  
FFII – Lit: Field Forces II”, Second Corps US Army Forces, responsible for III CTZ  
Grid(s) – Grid Coordinates -- correlation to a place on a tactical map according to XY axes  
Grp – Group

GVN – Government of Vietnam (South)  
Guship - armed helicopter or cargo airplane for supporting ground troops. Very powerful.  
helo(s) -- helicopter(s)  
Huey – UH-1 helicopter, either -B or -D model  
hvy - heavy  
immed - immediately  
III CTZ – 3rd Corps Tactical Zone, the AFVN designation for Saigon and environs (see FFII)  
Indiv -- Individual  
Inf – Infantry  
KIA – “Killed By Air”, or “Killed By Artillery” (in context)  
Km – Kilometer(s)  
LAW - Lightweight (shoulder-fired) Antitank Weapon, a disposable tube containing a rocket  
Lbs – Pounds  
LCT – Land Clearing Team (Engineers)  
LOC – Line(s) Of Communication  
LP -- Listening Post  
Lt -- light  
LRRP - Long-range reconnaissance patrol, also a member of one  
LZ - Landing Zone, for helicopters  
mi. – Mile(s)  
m. - Meters  
MACV – Military Assistance Command Vietnam: highest in-country command for US forces; Westmoreland, Abrams  
MEDCAP – medical civic action program  
MEDEVAC, medevac – medical evacuation by helicopter from battlefield  
MG – Machine Gun (where designated thus rather than “automatic weapon”)  
MSR – Main Supply Route, generally a highway  
Msg - message  
neg - negative (no, none)  
N – North  
NBI – Non-Battle Injury  
NDP – Night Defensive Position  
NLF – South Vietnamese communist forces (National Liberation Front)  
NVA – North Vietnamese Army / formally People’s Army Vietnam (PAVN)  
NVN – North Vietnam / Democratic Republic of Vietnam  
Op - Operation  
OP - Outpost  
OPCON – placed under the Operational Control of  
PFs - Local South VN forces, something like Nat’l Guard, lightly armed, less trained  
Prov - Province  
Plt - Platoon  
Psywar - Psychological Warfare  
Puff – US aircraft gunship, “Puff The Magic Dragon”  
Regt - Regiment

Req - Requisition(s)  
RF – Regional Forces (South Vietnamese)  
RIF – Reconnaissance In Force (usually a euphemism for “trolling for VC and/or  
“small offensive operation”)  
RPG – Rocket Propelled Grenade  
RR - Recoilless Rifle  
RVN – Republic of Vietnam (South)  
S – South  
S&D – Search and Destroy (Operation)  
SA – Small Arms  
Sqdr - Squadron, equals a “battalion of Cavalry”, also an Air Force group  
designation. Cav Sqdr had more M113s than a Mech Bn.  
SVN -- South Viet Nam  
Tac Air – tactical or “close” air support by Air Force fighter-bombers  
TAOI / TAOR – Tactical Area of Interest, Tactical Area of Responsibility  
TF – Task Force  
TOT - Time Over Target, Time On Target  
Trp – Troop = about the same as a Company of infantry. Mech Inf had fewer  
M113s assigned, though.  
TSN – Ton Son Nhut (US Air Force Base at Saigon)  
Unkn - unknown  
USARHAW – US Army Hawaii  
USARPAC - US Army Pacific  
USARV – US Army Vietnam responsible for assisting ARVN forces  
Vic - lit: “vicinity”, in the vicinity of  
VC – Viet Cong  
VCS -- appears to mean “Viet Cong Suspect” in some reports  
VN - Vietnam or Vietnamese  
W – West  
Willie Peter -- white phosphorous mortar or artillery round; probably “WP” in old  
phonetic alphabet



## TOMAHAWKS & TROPIC LIGHTNING

RVN 1966 - 1970

This is a story of the U.S. Army's **4<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 23d Infantry "Tomahawks"** during the course of its deployment to the Republic of Vietnam, 1966-1970 as part of the US 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. The mission was to defeat the militant communist forces (Viet Cong) that sought to overthrow the existing Government, and incorporate the Republic of Vietnam [South- ed.] into one nation under the Hanoi government. [People's Republic of Vietnam.] It intends to also serve as a reminder to the reader of the 330+ "Tomahawks" Killed In Action there. **Fourth Battalion, 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry** took part in all twelve of the 25th Division's campaigns, and received two Valorous Unit Awards and two RVN Cross Of Gallantry With Palm Awards. The **23rd Infantry Regiment** has a valorous and distinguished history of service dating-back to the US Civil War. As one of the most decorated infantry regiments in the United States Army, its achievements through the years have set a standard to uphold, a tradition to continue, and an organization of which to be exceedingly proud

The war in Vietnam was as complex as any in our history. It had no front, no rear. There was often no easily identifiable enemy. The Communists denied there were any North Vietnamese in the South while it's soldiers there lived among the people they threatened. The 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division engaged regimental-sized forces, but also fought single guerrilla bands of but a few men. It faced the full range of weapons from stone-age punji sticks to modern rocket artillery. The secure rear areas of past wars that were so necessary for support did not exist in RVN; only the areas that troops actively secured could be used for support activities. This resulted in the US adopting the "base camp," among other innovations. One must further consider that US forces were restrained from offensive actions on a strategic scale, and for the Army, that meant operations outside the borders of South Vietnam. The concept for the Allied forces thus became one of vigorous tactical offense, within the confines of a strategic defense; to move out and meet the enemy to spoil his attacks and pre-empt his initiative. At the tactical scale were two offensives; the enemy's, and ours.

The goal of this compilation is to set out a "story" of the **4<sup>th</sup> Battalion 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry (later Mechanized)** as a functioning unit, at its several levels, as it is told in official records and histories of the war in Vietnam, and to add to these rather impersonal recitations of facts and descriptions a bit of flesh and blood via first-person recollections and observations of its Veterans.

### 1965 AND THE BUILDUP: OPERATION BLUE LIGHT

In 1965, as its traditions dictated, 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division was based at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. Under typical cold-war contingency plans, it was ready to deploy within a few hours for the "Alert Brigade", and within two weeks for the entire division, including all necessary supplies and equipment, and an adequate supply pipeline. In August, 1965, the 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division received MACV equipment advisories for units deploying to RVN. Considering this made imminent deployment Division

probable, they began planning to procure critical items. The CINCUSARPAC advance warning order to 25th Infantry Division is dated 27 October, 1965, but USARHAW received it two weeks later on 13 November, 1965. Then on 14 December, 1965 came a change in the warning order revising the organizational commitment from one-Bde task force to two Brigade task forces. USARPAC's Movement Directive issued two days later. Immediate procurement and planning began. Men, weapons, and vehicles, sufficient ammunition, food, supplies, equipment, and spares had to be deployed to serve fully the division until the regular supply channel could be established once in-country.

Within two months of the October directive, all planning and execution was carried out for 100% inspection of 115,965 items, plus the correct preparation, loading, stowage, and movement of 127,225 thousand tons of cargo aboard 21 cargo vessels and one special purpose vessel (Comet) for discharge at five ports, and 4,749 tons of cargo for airlift (for 3rd Brigade Task Force - Pleiku.) The self-service supply center reached zero balance. As one example, phosphate-coated weapons had to meet requirements for light reflectivity [surface must be from medium gray to black], the Division turned in for exchange 1,142 M14 rifles, 1,170 .45 caliber pistols and 218 M112 mounts, Approx 50% of the M14 rifles, 65% of the pistols, and 75% of the mounts would have passed inspection except for refinishing. Gunners on some vehicles were vulnerable to opposing fire because of their exposed positions, so the Division's Commanding General (MG Frederick Weyand) requested that 145 protective shields for M113 machine gunners be designed and fabricated in Division maintenance shops since no shield design or other fabrication facilities were available. Shields were fabricated for 117 APCs, 23 for self-propelled artillery vehicles, and five for helicopters.

Additional base camp items included: 168 walk-in refrigerators; 2,800 insulated vacuum jugs, 2,100 tents and prefab tent frame kits; 16,000 canvas cots; 2,500 rucksacks, 8,000 jungle hammocks; 40,000 coils of concertina wire in 50 lb coils and 40,000 rolls barbed wire; 368,000 pickets, two million sandbags, and miles of signal wire. Division requirements for pre-cut tent frames (small, medium and large) totaled about 2,100 of which the Schofield Barracks Area Engineer manufactured about 1,200 in the engineer carpenter shops, while the balance were constructed through local contracts.

Of the 15,736 troops deployed, 22.3 per cent or 3,514 troops were airlifted. The 12,222 men proceeding by sea were transported on eight troop-ships. On-man portions of the basic load of ammunition were combat loaded so that they would be immediately available to troops debarking at landing areas. The remainder of the basic load was bulk-loaded. For loading, the army assumed temporary operational control of Pier 39 and adjacent hard stand. Fourteen of the 30 ships were loaded at Pier 39 due to its better configuration permitting simultaneous receipt and delivery of both inside and outside cargo during loading of four deep-draft ships.

During the period 10 February - 15 April accompanying supplies and unit impedimenta totaling 10,498 tons, including 21 tons of ammo, 856 tons of vehicles

and equipment, 2,746 vehicles, and 9621 tons general cargo were moved to the army port. 186 buses were required for initial move of troops of 25<sup>th</sup> Inf division (-).

Cost [in 1965 \$] incurred in the deployment of 25th Infantry Division was \$14.8 million.

## **1965-66 -- ALASKA BATTALIONS TO HAWAII.**

Meanwhile, elements of 1st Brigade were ordered to assemble in Hawaii, including **4th Bn 23d Infantry "Tomahawks"** from **172<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Brigade (Mechanized)**, Ft Richardson, Alaska; and 4th Battalion 9th Infantry "Manchus" from 171st Infantry Brigade, Ft. Wainwright, Alaska. These made their way by rail to Whittier, AK where they sailed to join 2nd Battalion 14th Infantry "Golden Dragons," already at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. In order to bring **4/23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry** to combat strength, the battalion drew heavily on men assigned to 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 60<sup>th</sup> Infantry (Mechanized) at Ft Richardson. 4/9<sup>th</sup> Inf did the same with men from a 47<sup>th</sup> Infantry (Mech) Battalion stationed at Ft Wainwright.

**4/23d Infantry** and 4/9th Infantry boarded the USNS Leroy Eltinge on 20 January, 1966 and, after a rough winter passage from the North Pacific, arrived at Honolulu (Pearl City) 27 January, 1966. Intensive training followed until 15 April.

Info From Official Records: [Abbreviations are in the original] Equipping Two Additional Inf Bns: In early Oct 1965, Dept of the Army (DA) directed the reorganization of 25th Infantry Division thru activating two new infantry battalions: the 4th and 5th Bns, 21st Inf, by USARPAC on 2 December. They were deactivated on 20 December after DA had designated two Alaska battalions to join the 25<sup>th</sup> Division: 4/9<sup>th</sup> Inf and **4/23<sup>rd</sup> Inf**. By mid-October, USARHAW had prepared and submitted requisitions for TOE items to equip the two Bns 21st Inf, and by the last week of Oct, USARPAC had forwarded these requisitions to CONUS. Meanwhile, equipment available in USARHAW stocks, plus stocks made available through lateral transfers from indiv units were being issued to the 25th Inf Division for the two Battalions of 21st Infantry. However, when DA designated the two Alaska Bns, indicating that these would close Hawaii from Alaska by the end of January, 1966 with individual clothing and equipment, and indiv and crew-served weapons, so numerous adjustments and cancellations were made for requisitions in the system. DA authorized USARPAC to apply equipment pre-positioned in DAFD (DA Forward Depot) to fill shortages for the Alaska Bns. Thru a combination of these resources - issues from USARHAW, shipments from CONUS, and issues from DAFD stocks - the requirements of 4/9<sup>th</sup> Inf and **4/23<sup>rd</sup> Inf** were fully met (with the exception of certain DA-controlled items) when these orgs, then part of 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, deployed from Hawaii in mid Apr. [Ed note: we scrounged like mad, too, for hammers, saws, screws, screwdrivers, nails, lumber, soap, toilet paper, lanterns, candles, flashlights, batteries, writing paper, you name it.]

\* \* \* \* \*

*Editor's note : E-mails from 4/23<sup>rd</sup> members on the Association website discussing events are italicized below.*

*Sep 2, 03*

*Harry here, I too was assigned to the 1/60th (M). We were at the gym for some intramural basketball when the gym supervisor told us to report back to the unit. That's when I was transferred **to B, 4/23**, I hadn't been in Alaska for very long at the time of the transfer. Quick note, when I was in Germany I saw a guy that had been with the 25th in Korea. I saw his combat patch and thought, if I ever went to combat I want to go w/that unit. Be careful what you ask for. Harry*

*May 19, 02*

*Neil . . . . Speaking of the Leroy Eltinge, you remember the engines shutting down and they had to repair them while we just bobbed around on the ocean about the fourth or fifth day out. They announced that if they could not get it fixed, they were in contact with a ship just over the horizon that would take us under tow and take us into Honolulu. But they got it fixed and we continued under our own steam. By the way those were Merchant Marine cooks and we had to go to the galley and help with cooking the food and the cleaning. Also, wasn't Barnes confined to his rack the whole trip because he was so seasick?*

*Bill H TF Tomahawk '65-'68*

*May 20, 02*

*Bill – I thought it was Michaels who was incapacitated. He was delirious, totally out of it. I heard when he carried him off to the sick bay. they knocked him out (whichever man it was) with a shot. Several days in a row, so he stayed knocked out.*

*Neil*

*Mar 26, 07*

*After being notified in December of 1965 of being redeployed, the battalion began inspecting and testing all weapons and equipment to assure combat serviceability. Crew served Weapons and equipment were coated with cosmoline, vacuum sealed, and put in CONEX containers for shipment. Everything was loaded on a train for movement to the port south of Anchorage.*

*The deployment of the **4th BN, 23rd Infantry** to the Republic of Vietnam was to be secret. At Oh-dark-thirty on a cold night, personnel boarded the train to the port. As it began to move, the post band played and the dependants who had not yet left for the lower 48 waved their goodbyes, flashbulbs popping. As the train pulled through Anchorage, a long line of tearful bartenders and bargirls waved their goodbyes. So much of deployment security.*

*JY*

*\* \* \* \* \**

## 1966 BACKGROUND

As of 1 January, 1966 the US military was 184,000 strong in the Republic of Vietnam (RVN or "South" Vietnam.) Among the areas then most actively destabilized and threatened by the communists were certain areas in Northern (I Corps), Central (II Corps including Pleiku and Qui Nhon), Mekong Delta (IV Corps), and the Saigon Corridors (III Corps) including Metro Saigon. Of these, the Saigon area was considered paramount. It was the seat of the South Vietnamese government, contained HQs for both the AFRVN and US military, contained the only large shipping ports and docks, and had the greatest density of population, among many reasons.

### **NEW CAMPAIGN : Counteroffensive**

#### **2nd BRIGADE TO CU CHI**

The base camp designated for HQs 25<sup>th</sup> Inf Division lay just outside Cu Chi village in Hau Nghia Province, an agricultural hamlet 20 miles WNW of Saigon and 18 miles from the Cambodian border. The land is flat and dry, and used mainly for cattle and vegetable farming, plus rice. Much of it is also abandoned, due to the long-running hostilities in that area. Its strategic importance is that it stands between VC strongholds/ sources of supply located SW, W, NW, and N of Saigon, and Saigon itself. They called Cu Chi Base "Hell's Half Acre" because of fierce fighting which took place there to secure the land. Before the "Tropic Lightning" arrived, it was a VC sanctuary. NLF guys came there to rest and relax after a hot battle. Other US troops, including 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade and 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division had swept the area in 1965 with Operations (Ops) Crimp and Buckskin to name two, but they did not attempt to stay.

The 25<sup>th</sup> swept it again, and as intended, stayed. First on the scene was 2<sup>nd</sup> Bde, consisting of 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Bns 27<sup>th</sup> Inf, 1<sup>st</sup> Bn 5<sup>th</sup> Inf (Mech), 3<sup>rd</sup> Squadron 4<sup>th</sup> Cav, and 1/69<sup>th</sup> Armor, plus artillery and support troops. The 25<sup>th</sup> Inf Div's motto is "Tropic Lightning - Ready to Strike, Anywhere, Anytime!" They struck there, and then, and continued doing so daily for five full years. In fact, 25<sup>th</sup> Division mowed a swath through the area, killed VC, destroyed extensive complexes of tunnels and fortifications, expanded the perimeter, captured enemy ammo and supply caches, neutralized mines and booby traps, tore out jungle, and generally flattened the place, and then built a entire base on it. After two months of pounding the enemy round-the-clock, the 25<sup>th</sup>'s enclave at Cu Chi was firmly established. Specific Ops names during this phase include: BOBCAT, TARO LEAF I and II, CLEAN SWEEP I and II, PADDY BRIDGE, SEARCH OUT, FLUSH OUT, KOLCHAK I, HELMANO, NOGALIS, and EHU.

Information From Official Records: **OPERATION CLEAN SWEEP 22 – 24 Feb 66** represents combat operation methods, problems, and techniques, characteristic of that phase of the conflict.

Mission: 1/5<sup>th</sup> Inf (M) to search and destroy enemy forces; protect ARVN bulldozers leveling area [designated to become Cu Chi Base.]

Summary of Op: The op was a coordinated attack between 1/5<sup>th</sup> (M) and 49<sup>th</sup> Inf (ARVN) Regt. Elements of 1/8<sup>th</sup> Arty and C/65<sup>th</sup> Engr Bn, were in support.

Description of AO: Area searched on 22 - 23 Feb was heavily fortified with trenches behind every hedgerow. Foxholes were everywhere and there were many bunkers. Defensive tunnels were dug throughout; & extensive tunnels located. The area was recently used. Search of 24 Feb did not find evidence VC had stayed. Evidence found of fresh digging in the rubber plantation - holes about 2 feet deep.

1/5<sup>th</sup> (M) crossed the LD at 0830 (prescribed time). 1/49<sup>th</sup> (ARVN) Regt, attacked on the right, crossing LD 17 minutes late. 1/5<sup>th</sup> Mech attacked two Companies abreast, with Alpha on the right (E), and Bravo on the left (W). Recon Plt screened the left flank and one Plt C Co searched/cleared wooded area. Rest of C Co was in reserve protecting bulldozers. The two forward Cos proceeded through heavy woods. 1/49<sup>th</sup> (ARVN) Regt proceeded rapidly to the objective mounted on APCs.

Apparently they never dismount to search and destroy (S&D) in a zone until they arrived on their Objectives. Recon Plt and Co B took sniper fire, primarily from woods to their left and rear. As Recon broke into rice paddy short of the objective area they rec'd fire from the woodline. 2 AWs believed to be .50 cal. VC were engaged by MG & SA fire and Arty. It's believed one MG destroyed. From the time units crossed the LD to about 1130 all three Co's and Recon Plt received sniper fire, mostly from flanks & rear. Co B ran into extensive tunnels vic coord XT688120. Co B then searched area, and pushed approx 800 meters (m) NW into the woods to run down VC who had fled; no contact made. Co A searched with no further contact. Recon Platoon reconnoitered along the woodline with no contact. Co B returned to the perimeter via rice paddy SW of searched area, supported by one Plt of Co C. As Co B entered the rice paddy they took MG and SA arms fire from their right rear. The Bn spent the night in a perimeter. Nine ambushes were set; two were triggered (4 VC KIA -BC, 3 more est KIA).

On 23 Feb, 6 tanks from Troop B, 3/4 Cav, joined the attack, searched and cleared the area centered at coord [XT] 680125, and an area centered at 676118. Only contact was sniper fire, which was effectively returned. The 1/5<sup>th</sup> went into the same perimeter as the previous night, set 3 outlying ambushes, and 5 more closer to the perimeter. The only contact was made by ambush at coord XT668122 which observed 6 - 8 VC just before dark. VC were taken under fire by arty and SA. Results are unknown.

On 24 Feb, Alpha Co S&Dd a wooded area centered at XT665128; Recon Plt S&Dd an area centered at XT663133 but made no contact. Co B moved through the rubber SW of the road running through coord XT6613. Co C checked rice paddies around the objective area and protected bulldozers. On returning to base camp, Co C received fire from a lone sniper - the only contact of the day. Throughout the op security was provided to six ARVN bulldozers which leveled the entire area centered at coordinates XT662122.

\* \* \* \* \*

## FIRST BRIGADE TO CU CHI

On 15 Apr, 1st Bde, including the three infantry Bns, 7/11 Artillery (105mm / towed), and other Bde and Division elements still at Schofield Barracks boarded the USNS Nelson M Walker

for the trip to RVN. They arrived at Vung Tau 28 Apr, after a relatively smooth passage, offloaded next day, boarded C-130s for movement to Ton Son Nhut Air Base, then by highway in 2.5 ton trucks in an armed convoy to Cu Chi base, which was still in the early stages of construction.

Extensive work followed for several weeks, building up the Bn's quarters on the base's [generally] N/NE edge, just west of the road to outpost [OP] Ann Margaret. Tomahawks registered crew served weapons fire, built hooches, [covered huts] bunkers, fighting emplacements, latrines, showers, dug ditches, strung barb and commo wire, set mines, booby traps, trip flares; practiced patrols, ambushes, and maneuvering in Vietnam's terrain and climate, and began continuously to improve all facilities when in the Base Camp.

**6 May 1966: Johnnie E. Butler, B Company was Killed in Action.**

**7 May 1966: James E Johnson, B Company was Killed in Action.**

\* \* \* \* \*

emails

27 Dec 02

*I don't know if this all true, it's been a few years. I went over on the boat (Walker) in April of 66.*

*Was initially with FO team for **B Co. 4/23**. Lt .Herndon and Sergeant Carter. I remember this because within 4 days I was the only one of the original team left.*

*I was returned to FDC in May or June of 66, where I stayed for the rest of my tour.*

*I remember Lt. Vaughn and Otto ["Short Round"] sound familiar. Even "Scotti" sounds familiar. I'll look it all up in the yearbook this weekend.*

*I arrived in Hawaii about February 66. Had some good times for a naive kid.  
Tom D*

Aug 13, 03

*I know this says 4th/9th but the article also mentioned the **4/23** rd1st. Bde. Hits Cong From: The Army Reporter - April 15, 1966 Cu Chi, (25th Inf Div) Elements of the 1st. Brigade, the newest addition to division forces at Cu Chi, killed six Viet Cong in small actions during their first three days in base camp. Within 24 hours after the arrival of the Bde's three infantry battalions, Soldiers from each unit were manning the perimeter. At the same time, tent kits, mess facilities, showers and all the other things necessary for a new base camp were being constructed. And the soldiers of the 1st Bde discovered how little time it takes to become oriented to their new way of life in*

Vietnam. The brigade includes 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry, 4th Battalion 9th Infantry (Manchu) and the **4th Battalion, 23rd Infantry (Tomahawks)**. Providing artillery support for the brigade is the 7th Battalion, 11th Artillery commanded by Lt. Colonel William D. Brown. Of the six VC killed by 1st Bde, elements, half of them have been accounted for by the 4/9th on separate ambush patrols just outside the base camp.  
Cecil's Wife Marge

Feb 5, 06

Don: The 7/11 Arty (105 mm towed) deployed to Cu Chi with the 1st Brigade via ship (can't remember the name) in early 1966.

They deployed with other elements of the 1st Brigade, to include the 4/9 Manchu's, 2/14 Golden Dragons, and perhaps even **4/23** (straight leg infantry). They deployed to Cu Chi when only the advanced parties were there. They deployed on the northern perimeter with 4/9 on their right, and 2/14 on their left (the future Ann Margaret water point was to the front left of the 2/14 position). At the time of the deployment, there were no real roads in what was to become Cu Chi Base Camp, and only concertina wire and 2-man holes as the initial perimeter. Stay well guys.  
JM

Jan 2, 09

I remember when we first got over a lot of bushes/scrub were up close to the so-called perimeter. The engineers later came around and burned it all out. Also registered the 4.2's, 81's, and some very scary 106 firing to knock down abandoned structures out the left front of the perimeter. Scary because a 106round Outgoing sounds/feels much like something significant Incoming.

Neil

Jan 4, 09

Neil -- If I'm reading the Cu Chi Base map right, I was wounded in the area just above the name Bao Chua, about 3 clicks down from the top and to the left of the Filhol [Rubber Plantation] at XT624178. Not sure what that lighter green area just above the 'ua' in Chua means, but it could be the brushy clearing where we were wounded.

Don Hansen

Jan 5, 09

This is one of 2 pictures I took of the 106 RR's firing. Hard to tell but they do seem to be firing towards Bao Chua. If you look at the extreme right edge of the picture you can see what I believe is part of the berm. You can see dozer tracks in the dirt.

Reread that report of Operation Kipapa that you sent me. Strange but the way I remember it, on Sept 6, the time of the 2 boobytraps was reversed. I've gone over it in my head and I was in the group of 6 but I remember something happening earlier in the day. [Op discussed later pages – ed.]

Don Hansen

\* \* \* \* \*



## **CAMPAIGN: COUNTEROFFENSIVE 25 DECEMBER, 1965 THRU 30 JUNE, 1966**

**OPERATION AKRON** (8 May – 11 May 66.) On 9 May **4<sup>th</sup> Bn, 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry** began its part in the first major operation of the full 1<sup>st</sup> Bde, Operation AKRON, a 3-day Search & Destroy (S&D) op into Filhol Plantation. **4/23<sup>rd</sup> Inf Tomahawks**, with A/1/5 Inf (M) and one Plt A/1/69th Armor OPCON made a good showing, gained valuable experience in local terrain and conditions, and suffered its first KIA while accounting for four VC KIA (BC.) Following this op the Bn returned to Cu Chi base to resume work on their area.

Info From Official Records: OPERATION AKRON. Intel resulting from captured data, agent reports, & PW/ returnee reports, identifies VC units 2nd & 7th Bn, 165 A Regiment (Main Force), and C48 Heavy Weapons Co in FILHOL PLANTATION. In addition, guerrilla and support units of undetermined size are known to operate in area. These units generally host and prepare installations for main force and local force units that operate from or pass through area. (1) 2d Bn, 165 A Regt (Main Force) believed to be C1 (207), C2 (208), and C3 (209) Companies. Total strength of this Bn is estimated to be 400. Last reported location was vic of XT639246 on 28 April 66. (2) 7th Bn, 165 A Regt (Main Force), composition unknown. Total strength est 400. Last reported vic XT689210, 29 April 66. (3) C48 Heavy Weapons Co believed equipped with 50 cal MGs, 60mm mortars and possible 81 or 82mm mortars. Unit strength unknown. Last reported vic XT626225 15 April 66. The only enemy activity during the op was occasional light sniper fire. 1st Bde TF [Task Force] had negative contact with organized VC forces of significant size during op. **(TF) Tomahawk**, night of 9-10 May 66, received a possible squad size probing action. No suspected VC units were confirmed, nor were any new VC units discovered within the AO. Photo interp reports and visual recon disclosed many spider holes, trenches, and tunnels in area.

c. Terrain: generally flat to gently rolling and did not present an obstacle to any attached tracked vehicles. Vegetation was primarily rubber trees interspersed with heavy jungles and underbrush which made foot and wheeled vehicular movement difficult and restrictive in some areas. Densely forested areas provided limited concealment and cover. Observation was greatly restricted in heavy jungle and dense underbrush. Primary avenues of approach through area were limited to roads and trails.

d. Civic action and/or psywar activities: None.

e. Summary: Overall evaluation and accuracy of intelligence was rated B2 (usually reliable and probably true) during the op. Operational security was considered excellent.

9. Mission: 1st Brigade, 25th Inf Div, conducts search and destroy operations in sector vicinity FILHOL PLANTATION 8 - 11 May 66.

9 May 1966: **TF TOMAHAWK**, Lt Col Michael Barszcz, Cmdg, began move to Objective 3 at 0630 hrs; pre-planned airstrikes were conducted along route of movement and two armed helos provided aerial security along route. TOT for airstrike was 0730 hrs. TAC air located a sampan at 0808 hrs. Sunk at 0859 hrs. Lead element, attached mechanized infantry company, reached Obj 3 at 0941 hrs.

**TF** received ineffective sniper fire as it approached Obj area. Contact was less than 30 seconds. Approx 12 punji stake pits, well concealed, and four booby traps discovered in Obj area. All destroyed approx 1004 hrs. At 1038 hrs Co B discovered spider hole complex. At 1115 hrs helicopter resupply on Obj 3 began. **Co B** received sniper fire at 1120 hrs for less than 30 seconds with no indications of VC casualties. Trench system about 150 meters long with holes in rear for overhead was discovered at 1245 hrs. **TF** closed Obj 3 at 1531 hrs. At 1706 hrs a major tunnel complex was discovered. Twelve booby traps, 14 grenades and 20 rds of 7.62 mm ammo (all Chinese type) were found. At 1940 hrs one man from Co A 1/5 was KIA when searching tunnel and lifted a booby trapped door. At 2144 hrs **Co B** contacted VC force of undetermined size. Contact lasted approx eight minutes. Unit received SA fire for approx 30 minutes from their defensive positions.

10 May 1966. **TF TOMAHAWK**: There was one **KIA, Marvin H. Davis from Company B**, location noted as "Filhol Plantation", resulting from rifle grenade shrapnel at 0116 hours. Source and location of fire unknown. **TF** continued to receive sporadic fire throughout early morning resulting in 4 WIAs. One platoon from attached mech company made contact with the elements of the 7th ARVN Regt at 0820. The 1st Bde LNO with the 7th ARVN Regt met the mech plt. Lead elements left Objective 3 at 0719 hrs to continue S&D toward Obj 4. Airstrikes were conducted at 0935 hrs. Area had airstrikes previous day and secondary explosions reported. No visual results reported. At 0920 hrs a tunnel system vic XT676202 was investigated prior to airstrike and only evidence available of VC was blood spots in area. Lead element reached Obj 4 at 1112 hrs. At 1402 hrs the lead element on Obj 4 had one M-113 damaged as a result of mine at XT642221. Unit received two WIAs which were minor and required little first aid. At approx 1530 hrs all elements closed Obj 5 for the night. Aerial resupply began immediately and completed by 1700 hrs. No contact encountered that night.

11 May 1966 **TF TOMAHAWK**; At 0651 hours, aerial resupply initiated on Obj 4. At approx 0735 hrs lead element began moving toward Obj 5. At 0959 hours, **Co B** rec'd sniper fire from vic XT53185. Fire was returned but results unknown. At 1037 hours, **Co C** found tunnel complexes vic XT655181 and XT652180. One man wounded (booby trap) while searching tunnel. As the search Obj 5 continued, rifle grenade and sniper fire were received on their left flank. Direction of fire was unknown. **TF** continued to locate and destroy tunnels. At 1545 hours **TF Tomahawk** closed Cu Chi base camp.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### Lessons Learned

(3) **Combat Loads**: Troops started the operation with field pack, 2 canteens water, 2 "C" ration meals and one basic load of ammunition with the exception of one unit that carried 3 basic loads. Carrying more than one basic load was later determined excessive due to the resupply capabilities by helicopter.

e. Communications: PRC-10 radios functioned well in open areas and at close range. In secondary jungle, comms with the PRC-10 is spotty and unreliable. Issue of the PRC-25 radios should fix problem.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Unsure date 2005*

*SFC N. was in our company and I don't know if he transferred from B company or not. Somehow he and I were together for awhile that's why Cecil remembers him. He was my squad leader when SSG Lucero was away (maybe on emergency leave or something) Even Futch Brantley filled in for a while.. We were on a company sweep and as the company changed direction on our right flank, whoever was out there didn't keep an eye out and continued straight instead of turning. N, myself, Alan Pluchos and a few others were lost and we couldn't make radio contact. It was daylight so nobody panicked except N. I scouted ahead a bit and found a trail but I told Sgt N. we couldn't use it obviously. Well [uncertainty had] set in and he began hurrying down this trail. He didn't even take 20 steps and stepped on a mine and blew off his leg. He screamed for me because he and I were pretty close since Hawaii, (both being Italian I guess). I got to him the same time as SGT M--- . . . and Sgt L. I think. M's squad is the squad we lost contact with but the medic who was only 30 yards from. N refused to move to help. I thought N was a goner and we never heard about him again. I know he was taken to Japan because he was really messed up bad. I searched the list of KIAs and never found his name. The love lost with [squad leader and 1<sup>sts</sup> Sgt] stems from a football game between B/1/60 and C company in Alaska. He punched me around during plays and finally not knowing he would turn out to be my first shirt, I decked him. I knew I would never make SGT under [him] even though Lucero and Brantley put me in 3 times from Alaska, Hawaii and Nam. I know you remember our medic (J.?) [Mannie Jackson]. He sent a guy in from an operation that had a bad arm wound and CTL---- sent him back out. I signed an affidavit that Doc sent him in and that CTL sent him back out. The kid (from NY), lost his arm 2 months later and [1sgt] was in deep shit from the signed affidavit. He was a piece of shit and if you ever read the comic book "NAM" he's depicted in them as taking money for cushy jobs. Even our company sign is in the comic. Somebody told me he went to Leavenworth over it but who knows. He went back to Anchorage. He never left that base camp for the time we were there and early on he wrestled a gas mask out of Weyrauch's hands when he thought we were getting a gas attack. [Was from CS gas being pumped into a tunnel, blowing back. - ed]*

*Dennis O. C Co*

\* \* \* \* \*

From: Commander's Analysis: AKRON was the first Bde level opn conducted by 1st Bde, 25th Inf Div. Op was begun eight days after main body of the Bde closed Cu Chi, RVN. The op was a successful introduction to FILHOL PLANTATION and Bde ops. Instruction by 2d Bde, 25th Inf Division troops on tunnel destruction proved beneficial. Valuable experience gained at Plt, Co, Bn and Bde level. It was

determined that load carrying requirement of individual soldier can be greatly reduced when helicopter resupply is available.

**OPERATION WAHIAWA**, May 16-27, was a the 25<sup>th</sup> Inf Division's first two-Brigade operation in RVN, an airmobile / ground assault into Ho Bo & Boi Loi Woods, and Filhol Plantation. **Lt Col Barszcz** commanded **4<sup>th</sup> Bn, 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry**. VC suffered 157 KIA (BC) and 235 KIA (poss.)

Info From Official Records: Situation - HO BO, BOI LOI WOODS, and FILHOL PLANTATION were known to contain supply bases and believed to be base area for 320th Local Force Bn, and was a known VC stronghold and important commo-liaison base linking to Delta with Military Region [MR] 8 and War Zones C and D (NW and NE of Saigon, respectively). A VC captive revealed that TAY NINH Provincial Committee was located in BOI LOI. On 7 66 [incomplete] B/1/5 contacted elements of C4903 Co, 320th NLF Bn substantiated by documents found on a VC KIA. This action [was] characterized by heavy, accurate and well-disciplined SA and AW fires. Visual recon indicated extensive trench network in S edge of BOI LOI. During Op MASTIF in Feb 66, 1st Division discovered large rice caches and many base areas there. Post engagements with VC in area revealed enemy displayed good control of his units, executed action rapidly and violently, and delivered accurate SA and AW fires. Maximum use of mines, booby traps and harassing fires was effected throughout the AO.

Although all info prior to WAHIAWA indicated probable contact would be made with one or more Main Force units, this did not occur. Numerous times, US units encountered sporadic to heavy sniper fire in respective AOs but at no time was definite contact attained with VC Main Force units. The VC used to the utmost principles of camouflage, concealment and defense in depth as evidenced by extensive use of land mines and booby traps during defensive and delaying activities. When operating in separate groups VC effectively used sniper fire with excellent camouflage and extensive tunnel systems to engage friendly units. Occasionally VC effectively used command detonated mines and claymore-type weapons against friendly maneuver elements when contact was imminent. As a result of the vast amounts of material (especially rice) captured / destroyed during WAHIAWA, it was clear that FILHOL PLANTATION and HOBOWOODS had been long-used as local storage and resupply base for VC either within or in transit thru the AO. It is felt the aggressive response and positive action undertaken by maneuver units against these supply /storage areas and fortifications will seriously hamper and curtail VC activities in the near future and hinder any large-scale ops previously planned.

Terrain of FILHOL PLANTATION was generally flat to gently rolling. Vegetation consisted mainly of rubber trees interspersed with jungles and underbrush, which made foot movement restrictive in certain areas. Observation was greatly restricted in areas of heavy jungle and underbrush; conversely, camouflage and concealment in these same areas was more than adequate. The terrain traversed in the HOBOWOODS is similar to that of the FILHOL PLANTATION; however, numerous hedgerows, dry and flooded rice paddies and occasional abandoned villages are

encountered. In dense growth, overland movement is hindered until accessible routes could be found through or around the vegetation obstacle.

Terrain was generally flat with open areas north and south of BOI LOI WOODS. Open areas consist of rice paddies and cultivated fields. The dense undergrowth, trees and B-52 bomb craters restrict movement of tracked vehicles, on existing trails and low brush areas. Foot movement is slow and tedious. Vegetation provides excellent concealment for VC in harassing tactics and limits friendly observation. Trenches, bunkers and spider holes provide cover to VC from friendly SA and AW fire. As the trench network is generally oriented to the south, LZs were selected to the north of BOI LOI woods. Weather delayed the initial air strike and heli-borne lift for two hours on 16 May 66. Low ceilings during the morning rain had little effect on ops, but protracted rain will seriously restrict movement of tracked vehicles in the AO [Area of Operation].

Mission. The 25th Infantry Division conducts S&D Ops beginning 16700 May 66 to locate and destroy VC forces, supplies and bases in BOI LOI WOODS-FILHOL PLANTATION area.

Concept of Ops. Division conducts airmobile and ground ops with two Brigades during the period 16 - 26 May 66 to destroy VC forces, supplies and bases in the AO. Documents found 17 May indicated the TAY NINH Provincial Committee had been located in area. The locations of four sections subordinate to TAY NINH Prov. Committee were discovered as follows: TAY NINH Military Intel Sub-sections, TAY NINH Provincial Armament Sub-sections), Workers Proselytizing Section, TAY NINH Provincial Committee.

Enormous infrastructure work associated with COSVN Rear Service staff were located in the BOI LOI. Documents discovered indicated the presence of 320th Bn HQ (D14). On 20 May 66, a VC carried a message from 320th Bn Commander to 403d Company inquiring its location and condition.

The major enemy contact was made by B Co, 2nd Bn, 27<sup>th</sup> Inf 19 May 66 who engaged an est VC Platoon, resulting in 16 VC KIA (BC), and 12 VC KIA (poss). 157 VC were KIA (BC) and 235 possible, plus 46 caches of rice, ammo, medicine, cloth, fish, tin, wax were located and evac'd or destroyed; nine base camps, 41 fortifications, 140 tunnels destroyed.

16 May: **4 Bn, 23<sup>rd</sup> Inf** - Crossed LD (Bn bunker line) at 0735. **Recon Plt** found tunnel complex vic XT650175. Also located in same area were three Elm [81 mm?] mortar duds and one booby trap. All were destroyed at 0945 hrs. **Recon Plt** rec'd sniper fire at XT648184b at 0950. Fire returned with no casualties on either side. At 1151 hrs **Recon Plt** again received sniper fire from VC vic XT635210. Arty was used and VC withdrew. No casualties sustained. **Recon Plt** located house, XT648208, with warm rice on a table. Building was destroyed. **Recon Plt** and 3rd Sqdr, 4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Plt received sniper fire, XT649209 at 1845 hrs. The result was one WIA in Recon Plt. Sniper fire was suppressed.

*From 3/4 Cavalry Historical "Timeline" same date:*

May 16

- A [Alpha] Troop minus 3rd platoon attached to 1st Bde 25th ID for Operation Wahiawa.
- 1st Plt A Trp attached to 2/14 Infantry. 2/14 Inf Bn crossed the LD, (Bn bunker line) at 0700 with 1st Plt A Trp screening to the front. Bn moved generally north into FILHOL PLANTATION with no enemy contact by the main body. At 1000 the 1st Platoon A Trp received SA fire vic XT682197. The platoon immediately returned fire and continued to its assigned area. At 1130 the Cav Platoon encountered 5 VC including one woman vic XT679215 and brought them under fire, killing one and wounding one. Attempts to recover the wounded VC were unsuccessful. Several documents and items of personal equipment were found on the body recovered and in the area where the VC dropped them as they fled. No friendly casualties were sustained. The Bn closed XT670205 at 1500, and secured a perimeter for the night.
- **2nd Platoon A Troop, attached to 4/23 Inf Bn** crossed LD (Bn bunker line) at 0735. **Recon Plt** and 3/4 Cav Plat received sniper fire, XT649209 at 1845 hrs. One (1) WIA in Recon Plt. Sniper fire suppressed.
- 3rd Plt attached to 2nd Bde 25th ID.
- 2225 hrs A Trp Cdr requests flight at 0615 hrs to XT634202.

17 May: **4/23d Inf** - APC from Cav Platoon set off mine at 0825 hrs. No casualties sustained. **B Cocompany** rec'd sniper fire at 0915. Three men wounded and evac'd at 1010 hrs. Carbine and written material captured at 1230. At approx 1400 hrs lead elements of Bn moved into mined / booby-trapped area. Three KIAs and nine WIAs evac'd by "DUST OFF". Bn withdrew and established forward base at XT640212. **KIAs this day per the official "Coffelt Catabase" were: Earl G. Clark, B Company; CPT Arthur E Lewis, HHC, Bn Surgeon for whom the Division casualty receiving station was named; Victor H O'Neal, Bobby D. Swindell, and James E. Walker, all from B Company..**

18 May: **4/23d Inf** – At approx 1022 , **A Co** rec'd sniper fire. Fire was returned with no known VC casualties. **B Co** received fire from friendly helos at 1116 hrs with two WIA and one **KIA, Charles W. Bauman**. At 1347 **B Co** rec'd sniper fire. Two WIAs evac'd by resupply chopper. No known VC casualties. At approx 1417 Bn S2 recovered one antitank [AT] mine, 2000 rds 7.62 ammo clip, 200 rds 7.62 link ammo, four grenades, and ten unidentified tube shape objects. All items evacuated to Bde S2. **Bn TF** stopped at XT637227 at 1500 hrs for the night. **KIAs were: Aquila Baker and Irvin Knippelberg, both of C Company DOW, the same day.**

19 May: **4th Bn, 23d Inf** began movement at 0735. Just prior to moving **C Co** had one WIA from sniper fire. Individual was air evac'd and DOA at Cu Chi base. [This was probably Knippelberg and dates were confused. – ed] Mines, booby traps and punji pit were reported at 0911 hrs. Bn also had four (4) WIAs, at 1440 hrs. Fire was returned with .50 Cal MG, small arms and flame track. One (1) VC was killed by BC (body count). The Cav Plat had another WIA at same location at approx 1520 hrs. **Bn TF** (Task Force) stopped for the night at XT639232 at 1740 hrs. Several booby traps

and tunnels with connecting shelters were reported by **Co C**. Additional sniper fire was rec'd by the Cav Plat at 1925 hrs.

**4th Bn, 23rd Inf Bn TF** remained at XT639232 until approx 1430 hrs due to weather, which prevented resupply. After equipment was extracted **Bn TF** continued S&D mission to XT623238, arriving at 1615 hrs. An ambush was left at CP location for 19 May 1966 and engaged approx 21 VC at 1721 hrs. Results were seven VC KIA by BC and five VC KIA (poss). There were no US losses. Destroyed: two claymores, 25 lbs salt, wire and batteries, 600 lbs potash, 200 lbs peanuts, and 400 lbs rice.

**John M. Batiste of B Co is noted KIA on 24 May, 1966.**

**Bennie E. Foster and Robert Smith of HHC are noted KIA on 26 May, 1966.**

Commander's Analysis: a. Use of stay-behind ambushes again proved effective. As a unit departed an area where they had been for any length of time, well-concealed ambush forces were able to surprise VC moving into the area. b. When VC units in well-camouflaged fortified positions are encountered in dense woods such as the BOI LOI, maximum arty and air must be brought to bear on the VC positions prior to an infantry assault. c. Searching a known VC area is not sufficient. Slow, detailed and often repetitive searching is necessary to locate caches and VC installations. d. Gunships must enter the command net of the unit they support and must know the unit scheme of maneuver. If necessary, the gunship cmdr should land and be briefed by the CO or the S3. e. Bn CPs must be capable of rapid displacement by air. Units must program early lift of excess equipment such as night kits, demolitions, etc. by normal resupply ships. f. Firing the center tube, artillery or mortars, on the axis of advance is effective both as a means of maintaining direction in dense vegetation and for expediting support fires when enemy contact is made.

## **CAMPAIGN: COUNTEROFFENSIVE PHASE II, 1JULY, 1966 THRU 31 MAY, 1967**

**OPERATION MAKIKI** (3 Jun – 7 Jun 66) was an S&D op in Central Hau Nghia Prov with **4th Bn, 23rd Inf** OPCON to 2nd Bde 25th Div. All VC units avoided contact except for harassing activities until the op ended 7 Jun. Friendly losses were one KIA, one DOW, and 50 WIA. 21 VC were KIA plus 8 possibles. Considerable supplies and material were captured or destroyed.

Info From Official Records: OP MAKIKI **4/23d** Inf, commanded by **Lt. Col Barszcz**, took part in MAKIKI, an S&D op in central HAU NGHIA Province, OPCON to 2nd Bde. TF [Task Force – ed.] **4/23rd** consisted of: 2nd

FASC Plat (-), B/125 Signal, MP Plat 25th MP Co, 4/23 Inf (-), Elm [elements?] 25th MED, one Squad B/65 Engrs, 2nd & 3rd Plat, 16th RRU, + a Helicopter ARVN PSYOP Team.

Intelligence: Terrain in the AO was generally low and flat with the highest elevation being 5 m. Vegetation was bamboo hedge-rows, rice fields, and tall trees with

underbrush, all of which afforded good concealment to the enemy for harassing operations and evasive actions. The immediate rice fields and non-trafficable roads precluded the use of wheeled vehicles. Terrain and vegetation did not affect the use of APCs. The AO is completely VC controlled and dominated. VC units in this area have eluded contact with friendly forces except for harassing type actions. The C120 Local Force Co was reported in the area. Additionally, the 267<sup>th</sup> and 269<sup>th</sup> MF Bns, Deng Thap II Regt, have been known to operate in this area. The area has been used as a VC logistical and transfer point.

Concept of Operations: The 2<sup>nd</sup> Bde, 25<sup>th</sup> Inf Division conducted an airmobile and ground move to AO commencing 021000 Jun 66 to conduct search and destroy ops.

**4/23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry** actions: At 1104 hrs on 3 Jun, Bn conducted an airmobile assault into LZ 2 vic XT423130, completed at 1250 with neg contact. By 1355 two blocking positions were occupied, one by **Co A** and **Cmd Grp**, and one by Co C. At 1458, **Co A** had two WIA and **HHC** had one WIA from booby traps. **Co A** captured one. A total of five night ambushes were set with one of them capturing two VC, one of which was wounded and later died.

On 4 Jun, Co A, 1/5 (M) was OPCON **4<sup>th</sup> Bn 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry** to assist searching. At 0900 **Co A, 4<sup>th</sup> Bn, 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry** captured and evac'd 4,800 lbs rice. At 0900 **Alpha Co** received six WIA (booby traps) and destroyed one tunnel. At 1630 **Charlie Co** received one WIA (booby trap;) at 1700 **C Co** captured one VC and one CHICOM grenade. The Battalion captured a total 19 VC. Four night ambushes were set. On 5 Jun, **A Co** destroyed two bunkers, two tunnels, and captured one VC. At 1700 **C Co** had one WIA (booby trap) and **Recon Plat** had 2 WIA (booby traps.) Four night ambushes were set.

On 4 Jun **Co A** destroyed one reinforced bunker with firing ports and two camouflaged sampans. At 1225 Co A destroyed four camou-flaged sampans. At 1700 Co A captured 8,400 lbs rice which rice was distributed to local civilians upon the advice of National Police. All elements closed into a Bn perimeter and six night ambushes set. **Milton JS Seu , [company uncertain – ed] was KIA this day.**

On 7 Jun the Battalion airmobile-extracted. One Plt remained as a stay-behind force in vicinity of the LZ. The Bn (-) received sniper fire as the last helicopter left the area. At 1700 the stay behind force, with negative contact, was extracted from the AO and **4<sup>th</sup> Bn, 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry** was released from OPCON (operational control) 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade at 1720.

All units performed in an outstanding manner during operation MAKIKI. It was rewarding not only from the mission accomplished standpoint, but also in the friendships and harmonious relationships which were developed with members and advisors of the 25<sup>th</sup> ARVN Division.



**OPERATION UNIONTOWN** (9 June - 14 July) moved **4<sup>th</sup> Battalion 23rd Infantry** by order HQ, II FORCEV to serve as security force vic BINH HOA Airfield, RVN rock quarry, and LONG BINH Logistic Area. Light VC contact encountered.

**On 22 June, Thomas E. Sullivan of C Company was KIA, from shrapnel wounds to head.**

**On 26 June, Charles C. Brown of B Company was KIA,**

Counteroffensive Phase II 30 June 1966 – 30 April 1967

Info From Official Records: 5 July 66: **LTC Mike Barszcz** assigned as Exec Officer, 2nd Bde while at Bien Hoa.

5 July 66: LTC Louis J. North assumed command of 4th Bn, 23rd Inf. Capt Robert P Andrews assumed command **Co C, 4/23rd.**

\* \* \* \* \*

*Regarding Op Wahiawa –  
Jul 18, 05*

*Couling and Coplin were both fun guys. This many years later I get them mixed up. I'll remember the RTOs name shortly but man he could write a book. [ed – possibly McTurk] I only contacted Frank K. once. E-mailed once or twice.*

*Knip and I attended radio school and he was pretty sharp. Prior ervice (Marine). He was next to me and Pluchos on Wahiawa and said he was going to move up 10 meters and get a better look. I advised him to wait but he thought better. AT 6'3" or so he was a big target. He took 3 steps and was shot through the back right over our heads. I think he was alive when they took him out but DOW to Cu Chi. Corporal T [Thompson – ed] . was another guy I just thought of now that died in my arms almost. [He survived, but was disabled/discharged. – ed] Shot through the side of the chest and barely hanging on. I couldn't stay with him with the medic, couldn't watch it anymore. I'm going to check the Wall tonight because he just came into my mind as I write this. Amazing!!!!*

*Dennis [O.]*

*Aug 5, 05*

*Charlie Long was the guy who applied direct pressure to Cpl Thompson (WIA) that day. We must know him. He said he was friends with Ivan Hampton, Allison and Thompson. I remember Pluchos and I were within earshot of Thompson and we could hear him wheezing. I looked at him and his eyes were rolling back in his head. Awful site. I don't see Long on the B roster at all. He came with us from Alaska. [Sgt Long transferred from B to C Co. – ed]*

*Dennis*

*Aug 7, 05*

*Just got off the phone with Charles Long. He was my squad leader in C/4/23. A good guy. Retired regular army in '82. I'm sending him the video because he's in the*

beginning of it at Tay Ninh with Overton and Martinez. He left in Feb '67. Sgt Mead was his sponsor in Alaska. I knew it had to be him. We talked about a half hour and he was happy to hear from anybody he knew from those days. He's not on the roster so you can amend your notes again, but he definitely was in C/4/23 66-67. He didn't even remember what company for sure. He didn't remember all of his squads names until I told him. He took over for SSG Lucero. He talked about Knippelberg and Capt Andrews, CT Lewis, and Thompson. He remembered Nerio and us being lost and Gerald Diamond screaming in the night. Also taking Diamond's M16 away whenever we got back to Cu Chi.  
Dennis

Aug 8, 05

I remember the sniper that got through the bunker line, did you? I never had a date or time frame until tonight. I checked the date and it was a bit before Wahiawa. I know it was pretty dark and quiet as always We got a heads up in the bunker and the next day we heard about the details. I was shakin' on bunker guard always after that. Another time I radioed in because I saw movement to our front. Four or five heads appearing and disappearing (Starlight scope). I think it was LT Seiwert or maybe Gradwohl who came down and looked (after he told me to keep an eye on them).. They were moving slowly to the North towards Ann Margaret. That got his attention and he came to the bunker. An hour later AM got hit with AW fire an explosions of sorts. We called them (not me) and warned them of the movement. Also a report that the 2/14 fired on a patrol coming back in. An hour before in the 2/14 record ,the 4/9 and 4/23 sent out patrols That may have been my flashlight incident with Long, He mentioned it the other night and laughed about it. There was a description of it in the reports somewhere but I can't find it again. Sound familiar?  
Brain is MUSH!!!!  
Dennis

Sep 7, 03

I read your e-mails all the time and you guys Have a lot of good points. Even if we were not there at the same time. AS for the Flak Jackets And helmets all I remember is every time you turn around someone was saying put them on. AS for the VA Marge is right put in your claim now for everything not that you will get it but it funny that all these years later they admit to things that in the past that they said wasn't caused by the Gov. Hep C. As for Agent Orange And troops we had over there we had troops there in 1959 I read were they were spraying Agent Orange even back then. And that is when we lost our first troop over there . A plane crash during a mission. Gee wonder why we never knew about that because the Gov . didn't say anything about that. As for the VA so called Agent Orange test It is nothing more than a physical. I took their test and I was fine but within the year I came down with Non-Hodgkin's due to Agent Orange . So tell me why after all these years did I come down with it and why after taking the so called test where they said I was fine- I had it. Haven't been right since. I Am not really bitter at anyone , and I would Not want to trade My time spent with the Men of the 4th Bn 23rd Inf.

After 20 years in the Army I think of them the most. Well, Back to my quest to find the Photo Of Co C 1st of 60th Before we became the 23rd.

Armybob 1947 [Robert Smith]

Oct 22, 05

*Neil, the 'leg' life was miserable. I humped ammo for the M60 for 4 months or so. Physical exhaustion was at times unbearable. Still had to do LPs and Ambushes every night. We didn't wear flak jackets or helmets because of the additional weight. It was optional. Tracks changed all that overnight. Helmets and jackets were worn and packs stored below. The 'new' dangers were great, but we tripped fewer booby traps with our feet. The VC began placing the traps in the trees. Bottom line is the Tomahawks have endured whatever reality of war they were challenged by, rose to the occasion and distinguished itself. We, as individuals, have been bonded with all Combat Veterans with understanding the sacrifice. Some bravado, a lot of pride and great humor are ours. Who else can join these ranks???*

*Spook*

*(Always a Charlie Company Rocker!!! LOL,LOL,LOL)*

\* \* \* \* \*

**OPERATION KAHANA II** (13 Jul – 1 Aug 66) began at Vo Dat (Binh Tuy Prov, approx 25 miles NE of Saigon ) when **4<sup>th</sup> Bn, 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry** was flown there to conduct a series of Co-sized ops around Vo Dat and Vo Xu (approx 20 mi NE Saigon.). Some elements of Bn were in Xuan Loc. Alpha Co distinguished itself in an S&D in Vo Xu. Unknown to anyone, VC were set to ambush the district chief of Vo Dat, but Alpha's presence thwarted the attempt and resulted in two VC KIA. The New Life Hamlet at Vo Xu was built up and MEDCAPs undertaken in the area. During these ops **4<sup>th</sup> Bn, 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry** made its first contacts with Montagnards and were impressed with their attitude and perseverance.

By the end of July, the 25<sup>th</sup> Division at Cu Chi had accounted for more than 1,000 dead VC.

Info From Official Records: KAHANA I & II were Ops by 1st Bde with elements of the 10th Division ARVN. The purpose was to locate VC forces responsible for ambush against ARVN forces S of GIA RAY on 30 Jun, and to prevent increase of VC incidents in GIA RAY - VO DAT - VO XU area. 1st Bde controlled this op from vic XUAN LOC (YT460091). On 5 Jul 4/9th Inf (+) was committed in vic GIA RAY. On 15 Jul, **4th Battalion 23rd Infantry** was employed vic VO DAT - VO XU (XT7232). 1<sup>st</sup> Bde ops permitted loggers and charcoal workers to return to work, logging trucks to move logs cut as long as two years ago, and trucks and civilian buses resumed daily trips to SAIGON and other market places. Results were four VC KIA (BC), 17 VC KIA (poss), one VCC, five VCS, five KBA (poss).

\* \* \* \* \*

Quote from 25th Division Qlty Report ending 31 Jul 66 regarding perimeter defoliation at Cu Chi:

e. (FOUO) Chemical:

(1) Perimeter Defoliation.

(a) During the period 26 June - 5 July, the Division Chemical Section provided technical supervision to division troop units for the dispersal of 2, 4-D Defoliant on the perimeter of CU CHI Base Camp. At the same time, under the supervision of the Brigade Chemical Officers, the 1st and 2nd Brigades defoliated their portions of the perimeter.

**(b) The mixture used was two parts diesel and one part 2,4-D.**

(c) Method of dispersion was the use of the M106 Portable Riot Control Agent Dispenser (Mitey-Mite) loaded on a vehicle. In areas that could not be traversed by vehicles, the M106 was back-packed. The most effective vehicle utilized was the M113 Personnel Carrier since it was able to penetrate areas untenable to wheeled vehicles.

(d) The operation was considered effective in those areas covered by defoliant. A total of 22 barrels were dispersed. Subsequent evaluation of this operation indicates that an insufficient quantity was dispersed by this method to cover the entire perimeter and recurring applications will be required to defoliate new growth.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Jul 16, 03*

*I've been vaguely following the correspondence but then somebody mentioned Xuan Loc, now there's a name I haven't heard in 37 years.*

*I remember flying into it during the rainy season in '66 (It rained every day, but it's hard to describe as rain, because I never saw it rain as hard before or after). Xuan Loc was an island surrounded by water-soaked marshes and rain forest. I was back with the artillery at that time. Remember digging a hole outside of FDC for sandbags and a foxhole. The next day there we 63 frogs in the hole, (& they weren't Frenchmen).*

*I also remember sleeping in a rubber tree plantation in a pup tent, and I put my air mattress on some ammo boxes to stay out of the mud. A few days after setting up, my air mattress deflated, I check it out, and the rubberites (termites?) had eaten through the ammo boxes, and ate out the underside of my air mattress. Thanks for bringing back a fond memory.*

*Tom D.*

\* \* \* \* \*

*Tropic Lightning News, Sep 23, 1966. Page 3*

*Companies B & C*

*4/23rd Hits V.C.*

*Companies of the 4th Bn., 23rd Infantry recently met stubborn enemy resistance in activities just north of the Cu Chi base camp.*

*Co. B, encountered the Viet Cong first when it was hit by sniper fire, command detonated mines and grenades on its left flank. 2nd Lt. David P. Niles, 24, of Brockton, Mass., first platoon leader, commented: My platoon was pinned down*

*almost immediately. A mine hit the men and then grenades were hurled at us.*

*Seeing the wounded lying helplessly in a clearing with enemy grenades falling in their midst, Capt. David H. Kuhl, 25, of North Little Rock, Ark., the company commander, rushed into action. He snatched four grenades from a wounded man and blindly threw one into the brush to his front. The well-concealed enemy, however, retaliated with several more grenades, and Capt. Kuhl was hit.*

*Still holding on to three grenades, he painfully searched for the enemy. A wounded noncommissioned officer in the clearing came to the captain's assistance.*

*They're over there ! He screamed, pointing to a spot on the captain's right. Capt. Kuhl wheeled and pitched his deadly missiles. Following a series of explosions, the voice cried out again, "You got them! You got'em good, sir!" He certainly had. The enemy instantly fell silent, and the men of Co. B rapidly cleared and secured the objective.*

*Later in the week, Co. C. sweeping the same location, clashed head on with a Viet Cong force. They were hit by machine gun fire from a reinforced bunker and by grenades from a nearby tree line.*

*An armored personnel carrier (APC) front the 1st Bn. (Mech), 5th Inf., moved toward the enemy machine gun bunker. Moments later a tremendous blast blew off one of its tracks.*

*2nd Lt. Jams R. Kopp, 24, of Ashland, Ohio, the first platoon leader noted that the area was full of anti-tank mines, and said: "They were really waiting for armor."*

*Another APC moved forward to over-run the enemy bunker, but it too was stopped by the mines, Finally, a third APC rumbled successfully through the mine field and made its way to the bunker. Its steel tracks bit into the bunker wall, pulling the armored vehicle tip and over the top, completely crushing the enemy emplacement. No longer pinned down, the men of Co. C stormed the position, wiping out all resistance and chasing the fleeing VC survivors into the jungle.*

\* \* \* \* \*

**OPERATION OAHU** (1 Aug – 31 Aug 66) followed the **4/23<sup>rd</sup> Inf's** return to Cu Chi. Op OAHU was to secure the Tay Ninh area while 196th Infantry Brigade (Light) arrived in-country. 1st Bde Task Force: 4/9<sup>th</sup> Inf (-); **4/23<sup>rd</sup> Inf (-)**; 2/14<sup>th</sup> Inf; and 7/11<sup>th</sup> Arty conducted ops in Tay Ninh Province beginning 1 Aug 66 to locate and destroy VC forces, supplies, and bases and support Operation BLUE JAY vic Tay Ninh Airfield (West). The Bn moved by ground on 1 Aug and secured the 196th Bde base camp vic TAY NINH Airfield (west.) Only light enemy contact occurred in the NW sector.

Results of Operation OAHU were 14 VC KIA (BC), 6 VC KBA (BC), 69 VC KIA (poss), 16 VC KBA (poss), 12 VCC and 110 VCS.

With the 196th Bde in place, **4/23<sup>d</sup> Inf** was released and reassigned to 1st Inf Division and flown to Lai Khe to secure yet another perimeter. This time, it was for 1st Bde, 1st Inf Division, the first big night move for the Bn. **4/23<sup>rd</sup> Inf** was swiftly moved in Caribous and C-123s [fixed wing aircraft] to Lai Khe where they took over

on the perimeter. After 4 days of ops with the 1st Inf Div, **4/23rd Inf** was again moved back to Cu Chi.

**On 4 August, 1966 Timothy A Veltman of Charlie Company was KIA.**

From official Reports, (Items of interest):

\* June also marked the first time the VC used RPG-2 grenade launchers with success. The action was 18 Jun when A/1/5<sup>th</sup> Inf (M) Inf encountered an unknown size VC force in a heavily fortified position in the FILHOL Plantation. The grenade launchers damaged three APCs and inflicted casualties on occupants.

8 Aug 66 - 4th Bn, 9th Inf: C Co conducted an airmobile S&D op in vic XT095538. Unit established a base camp and conducted Plt size patrols during the day with negative contact. C Co remained overnight vic XT086514. At 1845 hrs, unit requested a dustoff for 2 KIA, 2 WIA resulting from sniper fire; dust off could not be effected until 2130 due to sniper fire being received on LZ. Duplicate signals for landing were received approx 3-5 km N of C Co LZ [landing zone] by dustoff pilots (colored lens flash lights.) The pilot while approaching LZ noticed a Vietnamese in LZ. He asked if any Vietnamese were in the area of LZ and when told they were not, pulled up and was guided to correct LZ. Artillery fire was called in the area where fake signals were coming from with results unknown. C Co reestablished their base camp to ZT084538 at 2135 hrs. Bde frequency was jammed from 1925 hours to 2005 hours, the alternate frequency was also jammed. Bde operated on the 4th Bn, 9th Inf frequency until jamming ceased.

**OPERATION KIPAPA** (Aug 31 – Sep 12 '66) got going with **Tomahawks** moving through the southern tip of Filhol Plantation to Bao Tran . . . to move into 1st Bde AO and conduct S&D ops to locate and destroy VC forces, base areas and supplies; conduct RIF and spoiling attacks against known or suspected VC units, activities or preparations during and after the RVN elections. The operation was to be away from the polling areas around known- or suspected VC locations. The Bao Cap - Bao Tran area had been historical VC strongholds and it proved to be every bit as tough as expected. Many bunker and tunnel complexes were found and destroyed. Once the perimeter was set up, Co-sized S&D ops ran daily. Large caches of weapons, documents and food were found and destroyed. As the op finished, **4<sup>th</sup> Bn, 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry** pulled out and returned to Cu Chi base. **Alpha Co** left a Plt-sized ambush behind, and after 3 hours the Plt accounted for one VC KIA and two WIA of four VC who walked into the perimeter to look for abandoned materials. Results of KIPAPA were eight VC KIA (BC), one VC KBA (BC), 24 VC KIA (poss), eight VC KBA (poss.)

Info From Official Records: a. Intel prior to KIPAPA indicated that enemy units of 7th Bn, 165A Regt were in Filhol Plantation. At the time of the op, 7th Bn, 165A Regt was reported at XT685219. Based on reports from ralliers, the AO of 7th Bn was reported as: Bau Lach, Bau Tran, Bao Cap, Bao Chien, and Bau Trang. One rallier reported the HQs of the 7th Bn near Bau Lach where many tunnels are located. The AO was known to contain guerrilla units that operated in groups of 1-2 men up to platoon- size. Intel from ralliers and experience from past ops showed that many

tunnels, bunkers, trenches and other enemy fortifications were located in the AO. b. Contact w/VC was with groups of one or two to squad size. Engagements usually consisted of sniper fire, however the VC did use mines, booby traps, rifle grenades, and AW fire. c. Captured documents showed that the Bde had contacted elements of the 2d Co, 7th Bn, 165A Regt and Cu Chi district "Quyet Chien II" Local Force Plt. Since the docs were captured in scattered areas of the plantation, signs were that C2 Co and Quyet Chien II Plt had been deployed in cells and squad-size forces to harass and monitor movement of friendly units. d. Terrain in the AO is flat with no significant high ground. Soil is sandy, giving good trafficability except in low areas. Vegetation ranges from marshy to dense jungle and/or heavy under-growth, rubber trees, bamboo and secondary hedgerows. e. Overall, intel was rated C/2 (fairly reliable and probably true). The overall security of KIPAPA was considered excellent.

MISSION: 1st Brigade conducts operations in Filhol Plantation to locate and destroy VC forces, supplies and bases and interdict VC logistics and infiltration.

CONCEPT OF OPERATION: 1st Brigade conducts S&D ops in the Filhol Plantation starting 31 Aug 66 with **4th Bn, 23d Infantry**.

Sept ember 1, 1966, **Colinna Feemster of B Company** was Killed in Action, noted "Operation Kipapa."

On 2 Sep, 4/9th Inf and 1/5<sup>th</sup> Inf begin ops. Each Bn established separate bases, searching and destroying VC facilities with emphasis on finding/destroying tunnels and fortifications. Arty and air preps would be used against VC strong points. Also, **A Co, 4<sup>th</sup> Bn/23d** Infantry with one Plt from 3/4 Cav attached ran S&D ops: vic XT625188. Co destroyed three tunnels at XT628195. One VC seen

jumping into a tunnel; one tunnel destroyed resulting in one VC KIA (Poss). A two-man bunker and a three-level tunnel destroyed. **Alpha Co** had two slight WIAs (booby traps) vic XT627190. Search found five more booby traps, then destroyed. **A Co** closed base camp at 1610 hrs. At 1020 hrs an OP from B Co observed 2 VC. 4.2" mortar and arty fire resulted in two VC KIA (Poss). A resupply ship rec'd AW fire XT627194, and was able to return to Cu Chi base; one pilot was WIA from fragments. Speed of aircraft, 40 knots, altitude 200 feet. A Chieu Hoi loudspeaker mission over **4/23<sup>rd</sup> Inf** by 246th Psywar Co. & 20,000 Chieu Hoi leaflets also dropped.

Sep 3, **4th Bn, 23d Inf: A Co** departed 0900 for S&D and had one WIA (booby trap,) evac'd by dust-off. **A Co** found/destroyed three tunnels and two bunkers containing: one new LAW, three rounds 57mm RR ammo, three rds 60mm, several booby trapped grenades, equip for rigging booby traps, 3 Chicom grenades, three rifle grenades, assorted clothing and documents. All items were evac'd to base camp. **A Co** returned base camp at 1700. **B Co** remained in base camp as Bn security. **Co C** with B/1/5 (M), attached departed base camp to link up with forward base. At XT634177, **C Co** received automatic weapons fire from a bunker, also rifle grenades, booby traps, in a command-detonated minefield. B/1/5 Inf (M) moved to assist and

two tracks struck AT mines in same area as AW fire was also rec'd. Results: 11 WIA and two APCs damaged. Results of **C Company's** encounter: **two men KIA: Robert P. Andrews Commanding, and Thomas J Mauldin, a 1<sup>st</sup> platoon squad leader**, plus nine WIA in Filhol Plantation. All troops were evac'd by dust-off. **C Co** continued to forward base, closing at 1830. B /1/5 (M) returned to base camp Cu Chi. There were four VC KIA.

12 Sep, **4/23d Inf**: Bn departed forward base camp at 1100 and closed Cu Chi base at 1320 hrs. **Alpha Co** left stay-behind ambush vic XT649189. At 1335 hrs, the stay behind ambush engaged four VC resulting in one VC KIA (BC) and two VC KIA (Poss). One 45 caliber pistol captured. Patrol returned Cu Chi 0953 hrs. UH1D aircraft received automatic weapons fire causing moderate damage. One US KIA and one US WIA.

1/5th (M) COMMANDER's ANALYSIS includes (quote) : a. The mere presence of a mechanized U.S. infantry unit in an area will significantly disrupt VC planned operations. In this respect, Op KIPAPA achieved its purpose of preventing VC from mounting ops against the polling places. b. On the other hand, VC very rapidly re-establish control over an area after U.S. unit leaves. c. Unless a relatively large number of troops are used simultaneously to occupy and search an area, the VC will merely move and keep out of the way of the searching unit. d. Detailed searches of densely populated areas by U.S. units are only marginally profitable. Even with one interpreter and two RVN National Policemen attached to each company, many valuable indications of VC presence are usually overlooked by the troops because of the language barrier and lack of familiarity with local customs.

**On 14 September, Efrain Jesus-Carerras of A Co was KIA.**

\* \* \* \* \*

July 12, 02

*I was with C Co. from August 66 to June '67. I was platoon leader of either 1st or 3rd [it was 1<sup>st</sup> Plt] platoon with Sgt. Alligood as Platoon Sgt. Was lead platoon the day that Sgt Mauldin and Capt. Andrews were killed. My RTO was McTurk. Do you know if he made it that day (Sept 3)? I think that we lost over 20 men from that platoon in that mine field. I remember the track that hit a mine trying to crush the bunker from where the fire was coming. A road wheel from the track hit Lt. Armstrong [actually Sgt Hatcher] who was 150' from the blast. Anyway, would love to attend the reunion if you can give me more information,  
Thanks, Jim Kopp*

Nov 15, 2001

*I took a look at the roster for HHC. Under Executive Officer there are couple of errors. It is important to note, however, that I left country in February 1967. There may have been changes subsequent to my departure.*

*MAJ. Donald A. Hamlin was the Bn. Operations Officer(S3). I was his RTO. He came with us from Alaska. He was not the XO at any time up to the date I left. The XO in 1966 - 1967 was MAJ. William T. Crim. I was with him when he was wounded*



*and refused to be medevac'd. In fact, I was the only one in the area who was not hit although everyone around me was wounded.*

*MAJ. Willie M. Campbell was promoted while in country. He was the Bn. Supply Officer (S4). I was with him when he commanded the advance party to Schofield Barracks from Fort Richardson. When I left he was the supply officer, and he expected to be transferred to another unit because of his promotion. I do not know what happened after my ETS; but I know, with certainty, that he was not the XO in 1966.*

*There is an oversight that should be corrected quickly. Absent from "Our Wall" is CPT. Robert P. Andrews. He is listed as the commander of Co. C without a KIA notation.*

*On September 2, 1966, wherever we were, CPT Andrews was for a short time with the HQ element. He was there very briefly from Co. C. One of the men in that field that day was Virgil Cooper. Virgil got hung up in a trip wire that was attached to an unexploded butterfly bomb. That day was the first of two days in the world's longest, widest minefield. CPT. Andrews was the one who extricated Cooper from the trip wire and he was the one who ultimately disconnected it from the bomb. I was very close to Cooper at the time he got tangled in the wire. I am extremely grateful to CPT. Andrews for getting Cooper out and profoundly thankful to him for keeping all of us in the area alive.*

*On September 3, CPT. Andrews died in another section of that minefield. He is on the Wall at Panel 10E line 62. I remember the event distinctly. As the Operations Officer's RTO, I got the call informing Bn. of his death, about 200 yards off on our right. I was on my way to get MAJ. Hamlin who was with GEN. Weyand.*

*When I reached MAJ. Hamlin, I had to interrupt his discussion with the General. There were two other people in that little LZ, the chopper pilot and some arrogant ignoramus from the Division's Public Information Office.*

*I was lucky to have been in **4/23**. Discipline there was always good. I respected, and in some instances admired, many of the Officers and several of the non-coms I knew. I had comrades of whom I think frequently, and I have made several trips to the Wall to visit some of them.*

*I have lately been thinking that the concept of brotherhood is too narrow and confining to describe the depth and extent of the connections made in combat. Brothers are flesh, connected by blood. We have the distinction of having souls connected through the blood of our comrades. This bond is distinctly deeper than that of mere parentage.*

*Thank you for doing the things necessary to get this web site up and running. I will be here frequently.*

*Justin S.*

*Aug 20, 2002*

*I live in Atlanta and the heat, this year, has been torrid. I know McT was hurt real bad, but I was in tunnel trying to get to a bunker with VC. I was shaking so bad that I thought I was going to shoot myself with my own 45. The red ants started dropping on me and I had to back out of the tunnel. Grabbed my M-16 and assaulted the bunker, fired a few bursts and ran out of ammo. I had taken my ammo belt off to get in the tunnel and I was out in the open with no ammo!!! Lt Gradwohl tossed a few*

*clips up to me and I got the hell out of there when the APC hit the mine on the way to its attempt to crush the bunker. A road wheel from the APC hit Lt. A who was 150' away from the blast. In any event, that was a bad day!! Sgt. Mauldin. was a good man and I had to write a letter to his wife explaining the circumstances surrounding his KIA. [ed correction: "Road Wheel" was Sgt Louis Hatcher, 3<sup>rd</sup> Plt, C Co.]*

*Give me a call if you are ever in Atlanta. Sgt. Ed C, and Terry L live nearby.  
Jim K.*

*Jun 26, 07*

*Neil – I remember that day, first squad was just to the right of the 5th. mech track that hit the bomb. We should never forget our fallen brothers.*

*Gerald*

*Jun 26, 07*

*Neil - When that track hit the mine I was half way between it and Sgt Hatcher. The track was coming over/through a berm/hedgerow and when the front of it came down the left track landed on a mine. That road wheel had to have passed right by me. I never even got hit by a piece of dirt. That's not the only time I was lucky. It was years before I realized that. I don't think the driver of the track made it, he was in real bad shape.*

*Don H*

*Jun 26*

*That engagement was the one where a kid in the 5<sup>th</sup> Mech, riding on top of a track in support and the track hit a mine. He screamed something about "getting you bastards" and ran into the bush with a rifle. There was a pop. He staggered out holding his stomach where he'd been shot, and dropped. No idea his condition after that.*

*Neil*

*Jun 27, 07*

*I remember being amazed that Sgt H was laying on the ground with a look of extreme pain on his face. If he was showing pain he had to be hurt bad. Our eyes met and I know I had this dumb look on my face. I know you're not supposed to go up a wounded/injured person and go "Oh shit, are you f\*\*ked up" but I couldn't help it. Even though he was hurt bad he was lucky. That road wheel was split open on one side so that it had an edge like a jagged blade. Sgt Hatcher had to have been hit by the undamaged side or he would have been cut in half.*

*This talk about Sgt H has reminded me of how lucky I was in Nam. Here are the close calls I remember. It was the first shot I heard fired in anger. A sniper in a tree fires at me and misses. The round lands between Sgt. G's feet.*

*Track hits a land mine. A road wheel had to pass right by me and hits Sgt H, hurting him bad. I don't even get hit by a piece of dirt. A booby trap goes off taking out the medic and most of second squad. Sp4 F who is right alongside of me, not three feet away, is hurt real bad. Sp4 H, Sp4 F and the medic are not KIA but never come back. I'm hit but I'm back in the field 3 days later with a purple heart.*

*I blindly stepped over 2 trip wires in the matter of a few minutes. The guy behind me is getting more than a little pissed off. I see the third wire.*

*An errant/misdirected 4.2 round comes down between the members of a single squad patrol. Landing not 15 ft from me, it's a dud. We moving thru a brushy area and the point man spots a trip wire. It's rigged to a 500 pound bomb. My distance to the bomb about 25 feet. I'm still alive – no detonation. And according to Spook, the guy who took my place as RTO, I think it was Horton, was hurt bad by a booby-trap in a tree only a few weeks after I left.*

*Don H*

\* \* \* \* \*

**OPERATION KALIHI (15 Sep – 14 Nov 66 ) 4th Bn, 23rd Inf** conducted Search & Destroy Operations FILHOL Plantation. Throughout the area, Co-size units ran both ground and air assaults to locate VC forces, plus BUDDY ops with ARVNs resulting in limited contact. On September 19, **Charlie Company lost Charles W. Jackson, KIA** from a GSW (gunshot wound).

On 3 Oct, Co **B/4/23rd Infantry** with Trp B/3/4th Cav began a two day S&D BUDDY op vic XT701182 with one company of 1/7th Regiment (ARVN).

On 10 Oct the Bn moved on foot to just north of Ton Qui and set up a defensive perimeter. From this base, company sweeps were run daily. On one sweep near Saigon R., **Alpha Co** was taken under fire by VC. Helos were also downed by ground fire. During the night, with flareships illuminating the area, Alpha maintained a perimeter around the downed ships. Next morning **B Co 4/23rd** reinforced them, and the disabled craft and Alpha Co were safely extracted. KALIHI ended for the Tomahawks, and **4/23rd Inf** was alerted for movement to the northeast Mekong Delta [far southeast tip of the 25<sup>th</sup> Inf Division AO] to relieve 4/9th Inf Bn at Ben Luc on Route 4. Results of KALIHI were 4 VC KIA (BC), VC KIA (Poss) 32, VC structures destroyed 142, VC structures damaged 64, bunkers destroyed 20. **Larry F. Smith of A Company was KIA on 25 Oct.; Marlin Bembenek and Michael Rand of B Company were KIA on 27 October.**

Info From Official Records: Concept of KALIHI was for 1<sup>st</sup> Bde to conduct squad, platoon, Co, and Bn ops in Filhol areas within 1st Bde's base defense AO. Each Bn of 1st Bde was given a patrol area of responsibility in which to run nightly ambushes and ops to provide early warning and to deny the VC movement in the areas next to base camp, and to be prepared to conduct ops vic XT7719 (4 digits) in conjunction with 1st Inf Division ops, conduct combined ops with elements of 1st Bn, 7th ARVN Regt, conduct civil affairs activities in Phu Hoa Dong including assist dependents of 21st Bn, 7th ARVN Regt and patrol to prevent infiltration into village of Vinh Cu. The op rec'd fire support from DivArty [25<sup>th</sup> Inf Div's Division Artillery- ed.] Operation BLACKJACK was run in the KALIHI AO by ¾ Cav as a separate op not controlled by this HQs.

**INTEL NOTE:** Intel studies from before the start of KALIHI indicated elements of 2d Battalion and 7th Battalion, 165A VC Regiment were operating in the AO. In

addition, Cu Chi "Quyet Chien II" local force Plt with approx 25 men was known to operate in Phu Hoa Dong - Ben Co area. Area between grid line 68, E to grid line 70, and N-S grid lines 21 and 16 and the Ap Nha Viec area were known to be heavily mined and booby trapped. This was confirmed during the op with 60 booby traps, 14 AT mines, and two AP mines destroyed.

Enemy equipment destroyed: SA ammo - 105 rds, AP mines - two, AT mines - 14, Grenades -ten, Booby traps -10, Explosives - ten lbs, 105mm - ten, rice - 10,562 lbs, Salt - 200 lbs, 60mm mortar rds - three, Claymore - one, rds 4.2 mortar - two, Sampan - nine, Barge - 1, VC structures - 102, Bunkers - 52, Foxholes - 23, Trenches - 13, Tunnels - 35, Punji pits - 32.

**OPERATION KAMUELA** (20 - 27 Sep 66) was primarily a 2/14<sup>th</sup> Inf operation, however one platoon **4th Battalion 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry** (units not specified) supported the op by securing 2/14<sup>th</sup>'s Dau Tieng base camp the night of 24 September.

**On 22 October, 1966, Teddy R. Jordan of A Co was Killed in Action.**

\* \* \* \* \*

Aug 18, 2002

*Just wondering if there was anyone that did remember (and I know the problem that is for many of you guys) about 1966 in Cu Chi or Bien Hoa.*

*Carl has said very little. I have heard about when Tim V. was killed and about Capt. A. He also mentioned about some farmer that would not give the guys some rice when the squad (would it be) was out on patrol and ran out of rations. How the guys threaten to kill the family and the farmer would still not give them rice. But when they threaten to kill the pigs he brought out rice right away.*

*You guys were some of the earliest ones to be over there. And somehow the public perception is now the group from "We Were Soldiers" and then "Platoon". Somehow 1966 seems to get lost in the shuffle.*

*I have let Carl know that I am in contact with you guys but at this point he still does not seem to have a lot of interest in chumming unless it is at the Legion.*

*Thanks,  
C's wife M*

August 19, 2002

*I recall the broad brush strokes of summer of 66. Not sure where to start. We arrived late April at Cu Chi camp which had no wire around it where we were, or maybe one strand in places. There were old bunker holes all over in the ground left over from the fight to clear the base, plus VC tunnel holes all around. Gradually all that got filled in. Just had a few tents on poles at first, and one or two of the wood-frame (kit) hooches. Cu Chi base was pretty much a big, open flat place scraped down to bare dirt by graders. The "perimeter" was where the bushes started, about 50 yards from the camp. Listening posts went out a little further.*

*Soon (early May I'd say) the kits of wood started coming to build the 'hooches' the same size as the tents (GP Medium). All the guys who could use hammers and saws were assigned to this. We also started patrolling. Filled millions of sand bags*

to put around everything. Built bunkers by the hooches & on the "bunker line." Set up all the mortars and aiming stakes & registered them on points around the perimeter. Had very little water to drink, but I remember warm cases of beer, & a few of soft drinks, so we at least had some fluids. No showers available, so built a few of those, & then they steadily got more plentiful. Just a 55 gallon drum or 2 up in the air on a wood trestle with a hose coming out of it. Lowering the outlet let water out, raising it stopped water flow.

The main way to get a shower was to whip off all your clothes when it started raining if you were able to, soap down if you had soap, and hope it rained long enough to rinse. No jungle boots or jungle fatigues yet, & the "old" style were wearing-out quickly.

Around mid-May we had the first large operation out toward Ho Bo Woods called Wahiawa after the town in Hawaii next to the base. Lost a bunch of wounded + Knippelberg and Baker KIA. The battalion surgeon was also killed because commander insisted he be in the field & after that the General forbade all doctors to walk in the boonies on operations. Late that month or early June we got alerted to move to Bien Hoa to take over patrolling from the Australians who were moving to Vung Tau (where the ship landed us.) I recall Capt A. approaching an Australian & asked him "who's in charge here?" The Aussie said in a real thick accent, "we're all in charge, mate." Pretty much their attitude—a very "democratic. lot. They had unlimited beer which was very popular with us. We were right at the end of the runway & the jets taking off on full afterburner was loud, day and night. Bien Hoa was our first chance for a PX and everybody bought battery power transistor radios and booze. Also we got our first jungle fatigues by raiding the Bien Hoa laundry.

A very angry Army Major helicopter pilot coming around complaining (in an accusatory way) of people stealing his fatigues from the laundry. The usual reaction was, of course, "who, us???" Can't remember who it was, but one of the main perpetrators was nearby wearing faded fatigues with dark spots where all the rank and pilot patches were cut off, trying not to die laughing.

From Bien Hoa Air Base they moved us to an open field near Long Binh for a week or so. Then they moved us to Xuan Loc where the 11th Armored Cav came to later, & further north to Vo Dat / Vo Xu until about mid-July. Some of the Battalion was at each place. There were a bunch of rubber plantations out east there. Late July, back to Cu Chi. Around that same time, we started getting some more legitimate tropical climate clothing.

Around late Jun/Jul we lost Sullivan to mortars. Early Aug lost Tim Veltman. All the time took steady WIAs, with some % not returning to the unit. When possible we worked on base camp area & had a team of experts headed by a sergeant I won't name who was assigned a large truck & 'acquired' things we needed from the Saigon area: a large generator for electric lights, lumber, plywood, jukebox, shipping containers of beer, can't remember what all. If it weren't for that, we'd have nothing. Until then we only had a few candles & one or 2 lanterns at night. We moved miles of wire to the new perimeter farther out (100 yards?) & strung it. Steadily patrolled & ran sweeps & operations.

In early August we went to Tay Ninh to provide security while the 196th Lt Inf Bde deployed from the US to their new base camp on C-130's. Right after we got there Capt Andrews called together the leaders & told them there'd be no fraternizing

*with the civilians, who were freely walking all thru our area. The CP tent was on one side of a bamboo thicket. On the thicket's opposite side at the other end, about 50 yards away, a long line of GI's had formed to 'fraternize' with some enterprising civilian females inside the thicket.*

*Then in early Sep back to Cu Chi & we lost Capt Andrews & Sgt Mauldin on 3 Sep. Later in September, we lost a guy who was only there a month or two to a sniper. Can't remember his name too well, but maybe it was Jackson [Charles Jackson – ed.] Word was he had been at MACVV earlier & had volunteered for infantry.*

*All this time there were steady ambushes going out nightly, daytime patrols & sweeps, bunker guard & radio watch at night, regular operations, air strikes all around our perimeter, artillery & mortars firing off and on all day and night (Co 81mms + the battalion 4.2's that were right across the street from us in Cu Chi Base.)*

*We had some hot food but it wasn't very good. Flour had weevils in it—so they got baked in bread & anything else made from flour, and you could taste them even when you couldn't see them. Freeze dried mystery meat called "gainsburgers" (a then-popular type of dog food, canned milk that tasted chalky. A kind of square flakes of dried potatoes about as thick as shirt-cardboard when cooked, & probably about the same taste. After cooking they formed a starchy goop swimming in starchy gravy. Tons of C rations. Some lucky people on detail to "higher" got luxuries like ice cream. Plus, we never really had enough liquid to drink. You could drink a quart of water or more every hour if you had it, which we didn't, and still be thirsty. Occasionally a few guys at a time could go to Cu Chi if not much was going on, but you had to go in armed convoys and carry a weapon at all times. Later in autumn we got word we'd be mechanized & started drawing all the new equipment.*

*We had a guy named Mike Richardson, 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon, who came all the way from Alaska. He'd been shot thru the arm late in summer I think, an evacuated to a hospital in Japan, & dropped from the company. A month or two later he showed back up one day—he just walked in. He'd been put back on active duty and assigned to the 1st Cav, but instead hitched a ride from Saigon to Cu Chi as soon as he arrived in-country. They managed to get him re-assigned to us officially. He didn't want to go with strangers.*

*By the middle of the tour I figured at least half the Co had been casualties of one sort or another, some treated & came returned, but I'd estimate half the number was shipped to the States for eventual medical discharge, and the rest KIA. My earlier memories are clearer. I think the longer it went, the more tired you got physically and mentally. The last few months are a haze with only the occasional clear memory.*

*Hopes this helps fill some gaps.*

*Neil C/4/23 65-67*

*Aug 19, 2002*

*Summer of '66. LTC Barszcz was replaced by a LTC North from division and then LTC Walworth Williams became CO late in the year. CPT Hennies - I think had C Co later branch switched to Armor and became a BG afterward.*

*Jim Y (?)*

Feb 5, 04 -- Paul:

*My memories of Ben Luc are pretty damn vivid. But two memories stand out. First: the huge frigging rats. They knocked over the M-60's in the bunkers at night; ate through boots, and the poor buzzards who were bitten (me included) had to chopper into Long Binh every morning for rabies shots, then back out to join their units on operation. I had the impression that if you shot the rats with your .45, they would turn around and give you the finger . Second: every morning at 6AM there was a sweet Vietnamese girl/DJ on AFN Saigon. She had the sweetest voice.*

*Before the 4/9 and 4/23 arrived in Ben Luc, the rats ate the rice. After we arrived, they ate us. Take care of those rat bites, Paul.*

JM

Aug 6, 2011

*Doc & Marge, -- I was there when Marlin Bembenek was killed, it was one of my squad that he was working on when he was shot. My gun crew went to help get Doc out of there along with some others that were hit as well. I still can see that to this day. Marlin Bembenek was a friend of mine and will always be till I see him again I hope.*

DC 65-67

\* \* \* \* \*

## **COUNTERINTELLIGENCE NOTE TO 18 SEP 66 Division QUARTERLY REPT**

Counterintelligence: The influx of approx 1200 daily hire laborers into the 25<sup>th</sup> Division base has required intensive and continuous counterintelligence measures to neutralize VC espionage. These have included maintaining personal data files on all indigenous personnel having access to the base, name checks against records of known or suspected VC or VC sympathizers, investigation of information concerning VC alleged to be in the division work force, and development of informants who can report on possible espionage attempts. Counterintelligence measures to date have resulted in the apprehension of nine persons on the division base who have admitted to conducting activities for the VC. In addition, approx 50 individuals have been detected with improper or false identification documents.

**OPERATION LANIKAI** (5 November – 10 December 1966) **4<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry** relieved 4/9 Infantry vicinity of Ben Luc (XS 6276) on 05 Nov 66 to conduct Search & Destroy operations, raids, combat patrols & ambushes via separate and joint operations with ARVN forces, to locate and destroy VC forces and supplies; support the Revolutionary Development Program and provide material and technical help to PF and RF outposts in "the Delta" 10-15 mi. SW of Saigon.

**4/23 (-) with Company A**, left Cu Chi 5 November 66. An important pacification program had been successfully begun by the "Manchus" who were due to rotate to Cu Chi. **4/23 (-)** closed Ben Luc base that afternoon. The convoy totaled 56 vehicles, and the Tomahawks spent the rest of the day working on the camp. **A C Co** ambush closed base camp 0625 next morning with neg contact. The Bn(-) devoted the rest of

6 Nov improving the base camp and firming plans for joint US/ARVN ops on 7 Nov. An **A Co** patrol contacted an unknown size VC force resulting in one US KIA and eight US WIA & a dustoff called. The area was secured and dust-off completed. "Buddy" ops began with combinations of pacification programs and security missions. Since **4/23rd Infantry** was only the 2<sup>nd</sup> major US unit to operate in the Delta, it was important to maintain good relations with the populace. LANIKAI resulted in extensive search and clear ops, MEDCAP and pacification throughout Nov. Results: 5 VC KIA (BC), 34 VC KIA (Poss), 17 VC KBA (BC). Captured: one 60mm mortar. Destroyed: 4 10 lb AT mines, three miles wire, 6 Chicom grenades.

**Members of 4<sup>th</sup> Bn, 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry KIA during this period include: Robert T. Reed of A Company on 14 November, Roger D. Ruoff of HHC on 16 November, and Clifford Nickleberry of A Company on 4 December.**

Info From Official Records: The Mekong Delta extends from Saigon south and west to the Gulf of Thailand and Cambodian border. With about 40,000 square km and an estimated 8 million inhabitants, it constitutes about 25% of the total land area of RVN, and contains about 50% of the population. The delta is a flat alluvial plain created by the Mekong River and its tributaries. Much of the surface is rice paddy, making it one of the world's most productive rice growing regions. It is by far the most important economic region in RVN.

8. INTELLIGENCE: a. At present, there is one VC Company known to be operating in each of the seven districts and one floating-type Company vicinity of Ben Luc. These Co's may be broken down into Plt-size or smaller units and are constantly moving to avoid conflicts with friendly troops. Each hamlet contains some type of VC defense squad if the hamlet is under VC influence. The 506th NLF Bn is the principal opposition and is believed to be at 550+ strength. The VC are well-armed and supplied. They employ US BAR'S, carbines, M-1's and sub-machine guns as well as Russian and Chicom weapons. *Heavy weapons include US 60mm mortars, 81 or 82mm mortars, 50 Cal MGs and 57mm Recoilless Rifles*. During this season the VC use the Oriental River, its tributaries and canals for resupply and troop movement. Many known and suspected VC agents are working in the area. Highway #4 Saigon - Ben Luc is relatively secure but should be traveled in convoys of at least two vehicles with three people per vehicle. Movement on this part of the highway should be as rapid as safety will allow to avoid SA fire. VC morale has been low due to the 4/9<sup>th</sup> Inf being committed. Chieu Hoi ralliers have more than doubled and efforts must be increased to raise this total, as Chieu Hois are a prime source of current intel. b. Two main force NLF Bns operate near the AO in Long An Province. The 506th Bn, some-times referred to by the code name D 506, has three rifle Co's and a HQs element giving it a strength of 400+. This unit is fairly well armed with the usual complement of SA and AW. Two 57mm RR's and two 50-caliber MGs have been reported but not confirmed. Combat effectiveness of this unit is unknown and no contact was made with it during the op.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Independent Bn or 2<sup>nd</sup> Separate Bn operates south of Ben Luc, generally from grid line 6271 E to line 7171, S to grid line 7164 and W to 6264. This unit has



approx strength of 350-400 in 3 or 4 rifle Co's, a heavy weapons Plt and a special mission unit. Arms includes SA, AW, two 50-caliber MGs, six 60mm and four 81mm mortars, and 2-4 57mm RR's. uniforms worn by troops of 2<sup>nd</sup> Independent range from the usual black pajamas to a green khaki fatigue uniform which has been reported. Combat effectiveness of this unit has been rising during the past few months due to several successful ambushes on RF/PF outposts in the area. The unit appears to maintain a strong defensive network in the vicinity of Phuo Van Village, XS 700700. The exact types of defense has not been determined because no friendly elements have penetrated this area. In addition to two main force Bns there are at least 6 LF Co's which range freely throughout the area. The C 280 Co generally operates north of the 75 east grid line along the Song Vam Co Dong River. This unit has a reported strength of 163 formed into three rifle and one weapons Platoon. Arms consists of SA, AW, 81mm and 60mm mortars. The C 314 Co generally operates in a 6000-meter radius from grid XS6366. The unit consists of three rifle and one weapons Plt. Unit strength is approx 125. The main mission of this unit is harassment of RF/PF outposts and supporting VC units in the area when necessary. C 315, C 316 and C 317 Co's have the same general configuration as C 314th and move freely throughout the AO away from large villages or cities. All units can link with either 506th or 2d Inf Bn for large scale ops. All units considered to be well-armed, well supplied with ammo and food and quite flexible. Villages and hamlets under VC domination have formed local defense forces under VC supervision. These forces are usually squad or Plt-size with 10 to 20 men depending on village size. The usual tactics consist of sniping, then warning guerilla forces operating where friendly forces attempt to conduct operations. Armament varies with hamlet. The terrain is completely flat with an elevation of two - three feet maximum and nearly all land is used for rice paddies from 12 - 24 inches deep. Nearly all paddies contain thick mud, which makes walking difficult. All major streams in the area were non-fordable by foot, and these streams vary from 2-5 meters deep depending on tides. Almost all mapped bridges had been blown by VC. The banks of all streams are covered with thick mangrove and water palm affording excellent concealment for VC snipers. Movement through these areas is slow and difficult due to heavy vegetation, mud and the inability to determine the exact edge of a stream bank. Any area with a slight degree of elevation and dry ground is populated by local farmers.

There are no obstacles to water movement in the area and all streams are used to the maximum as routes. Civilian movement commences at 0430 and continues until 1300 hrs at which time inhabitants rest. Movement begins again at 1500 and ceases with darkness. This is true for river and road traffic. Roads are unimproved dirt with the exception of Highway 4 which is two lane macadam. Weather is fairly consistent with early morning ground fog and haze which usually burns off by 0900. Skies during the day were generally clear with a prevailing northwest wind at 5 knots. Showers and thunderstorms usually built up by 1500 to 1600 hrs daily. Daily rain varies from none to 1.56 inches. Average high temp was 89/90 deg with low of 74/75 deg at night. Long An Province contains a wealth of intel agencies, which appear to be well organized and cooperative to US forces.

Info was timely and fairly accurate. The major problem was sorting information out of the numerous reports received daily. H & I fire is effective against VC morale.

9. MISSION: **4/23 Infantry** relives 4/9 Inf vic Ben Luc (XS 6276) 05 Nov 66, continues operation in AO to locate and destroy VC forces, supplies & base camps, interdict VC LOCs [lines of communication] and support the RDP.

10. CONCEPT OF OPERATION: a. **4<sup>th</sup> Bn 23 Infantry** relives 4/9 Inf vic Ben Luc (XS 6276) commencing 2 Nov. **C Co 4/23 Inf** is attached to 4/9 Inf during period 2 Nov 66 to 5 Nov 66; **4/23 Inf (-)** moves by convoy to Ben Luc on 5 Nov; relives 4/9 Inf of mission in AO and assumes responsibility for Ben Luc base camp 5 Nov. Selected staff **4/23 Inf** operates with 4/9 Inf during period 27 Oct - 4 Nov. After assuming mission from 4/9 Inf, conduct S&D ops, raids, combat patrols and ambushes in AO, separately and joint operations with ARVN forces, to locate and destroy VC forces and supplies; support the Revolutionary Development Program and provide material and technical assistance to PR [PF?] and RF outposts in AO. [South Vietnamese Regional or Popular Forces, nicknamed Ruff-Puffs.]

COMMANDERS ANALYSIS: a. Results of this operation were small compared with effort and time expended. However, the area was patrolled heavily and the VC LOC formerly in the vicinity of Ben Luc was undoubtedly disrupted. b. The wet marshy paddy area made all foot movement and maneuver extremely difficult. Without priority on helicopter support effective operation could not be conducted.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Mar 12*

*You have a damn good memory, Paul: Yep!! It was us that built the original bunkers in and around Ben Luc --- with the help of the engineers. The original bunkers were "ad hoc" style (sand bags, some lumber, PSP, ammo boxes, etc) -- just to get a perimeter up. However, about two weeks after we got there, the engineers came in with the first of the "bunker kits", which replaced most of the original perimeter bunkers. DO remember the old market with tin roof, open sides, lots of rice, and even more very big, NVA RATS.*

*I vividly remember the convoy going down there. The objective was to clear a base camp for the 9th Division, who were not scheduled to deploy for about another month. The only US presence in the area were some SF teams and Chopper units. As we move south of Saigon and got closer to Ben Luc, we got the word first to "don't fire until fired upon". That was frigging ridiculous. Then later we got the second order: "Don't fire until or unless wounded". That's when I really started to seriously question what was going on. But --- it was "great fun".*

*I also remember another thing quite vividly. AT 6AM every morning on AFN radio (Saigon), there was this sweet, honey-voiced Vietnamese girl who hosted the morning show. I can still here her sexy, little-girl voice to this day. (I'M TRYING TO REMEMBER THE PLEASANT THINGS --- BUT IT AIN'T EASY!!).*

*Back to our "NVA rat friends". Did they ever knock over the M-60's in the bunkers at night???????? And, I take you were able to avoid the daily chopper ride to Long Binh for Rabies (sp?) shots (every morning at 5AM). Another pleasant memory. Hang in there Paul. Hope to hear more soon.*

*Regards.*

*John M. 65-67; 69/70*

Feb 6, 04

*John M. -- So you actually got bitten by those rats! That had to take care of any low blood pressure problems you may have had. I only had one land on my bare chest while trying to sleep in the bunker. Never got bit, guess he didn't like the b/o or bug juice. Sure made me think about the black plague.*

*Aside from the ambush / friendly- fire incident, [A Co – ed.] my other most vivid memories are : Doing a riverine operation on the river that passed thru Ben Luc. It was on maybe a Korean war vintage landing craft with the drop down ramp. After long run up or down (?) the river, he turned the craft toward shore and with engines screaming pushed as far as he could into the trees. Took us 30-40 minutes to get thru the mangrove onto drier ground (what little there was in Long An province). That was the day the AP reporter [Peter Arnett ?] was with us. At the end of the mission, he openly showed his disgust that we had not made contact.*

*Also, while a battalion base, seems we got one hot meal a day, which we got on metal trays. After dinner, each squad took turns taking the drums of dinner waste on deuce-and-a-half trucks thru the village and down to the river. The kids all lined up along the way and chased the trucks. When we stopped to back up and dump our load, the kids would climb up the stake racks and we would have to force them away. When we dumped the drums into the river, which, like every river over there, was mud brown, they dove under water and came up with handfuls of our garbage. This one kid's face is burned into my memory, fat face, fat belly, no shirt, big grin, and both hands full of mashed potatoes mixed with coffee grounds.*

*Paul C 4/23*

\* \* \* \* \*

**OPERATION ATTLEBORO** (14 September - 25 November 1966) was begun by 196th Light Inf Bde, to search for and destroy VC bases, supplies and interdict VC LOCs near the TAY NINH Base camp. Operation ATTLEBORO was initially a 196th Brigade operation to the south and west of TAY NINH City, supported by 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade. The AO was expanded to include DAU TIENG to exploit VC logistic bases located there, and eventually included all of War Zone C, under operational control, of Field Forces II. VC units included elements of 9th VC Division (271st, 272d and 273d Regts), 101st NVA Regt, 70th Guard Regt, U8O Arty Regt, COSVN HQ and assoc facilities, 320th LF Bn, & LF Co's, and local guerrillas. The area contained large supply/arms/ammo caches, factories, hospitals and base camps of the Rear Services Supply and Transport sections of Group 82 and 83. It was expected that the VC would have the area well fortified against ground and airmobile assaults. Closeness to the Cambodian border, rivers into the area, well-developed road/ trails attested to the fact that VC were present and had the area well developed as a diversified military complex. There had been no significant [Free World Military Armed Forces operating in War Zone C since April - May 1966.

a. Intelligence: Prior to Operation: The VC 9th Division continued to avoid contact with U.S. Forces operating in Tay Ninh and Binh Duong Provinces. 2d Bde elements had encountered very light contact since their commitment on 10 November 1966. The 101st NVA Regt was believed to be withdrawing northeast toward Phuoc Long Province. Although the main force regiments of 9th Division

received a severe setback during their engagement with U.S. forces they still retained the capability of attacking at a time and place of their choosing. Brigade units were also expected to make contact with the three Battalions of the 70th Regt, which has the mission of COSVN security in War Zone "C."

Terrain in the AO varied from low, flat, cultivated fields to scrub brush and forested areas with double and triple canopy. The latter offered excellent concealment and poor observation. Approach was generally limited to developed trails and cleared areas. The only key terrain in the area, in the traditional military sense, is NUI BA DEN mountain, the top of which is controlled by USSF [United States Special Forces] with considerable VC activity on the slopes. Obstacles were found in streams, dense forests, inundated areas and paddies. The low land in the N area was flooded, making tracked vehicles and foot troop movement difficult.

ATTLEBORO eventually grew to include large parts of US 1st and 25th Infantry Divisions who joined together to run sweeps and assaults over a wide area of War Zone C. 196<sup>th</sup> Inf Brigade (Light) had been running Bn S&D operations up to 5 November when it contacted 9<sup>th</sup> VC Division northeast of Tay Ninh City. Control then handed off to 1<sup>st</sup> Inf Division who had also contacted the 9<sup>th</sup> Division from the east, and eventually to II FFV. On 10 Nov the 25<sup>th</sup> Division was brought in to conduct a RIF. 2nd Bde HQs and 2/14<sup>th</sup> Inf moved to Tay Ninh 8 Nov. On 9 Nov, the Division Forward CP and the Arty CP moved to Tay Ninh, and the Division Forward CP assumed control. On 10 Nov the mission was to destroy 9th VC Division in War Zone C. VC 271st Regt was thought to be located northeast of Bau Co, and 2nd Brigade was ordered to begin S&D ops to destroy them.

2<sup>nd</sup> Bde moved to establish a FSB at Bau Co. 1/8th Artillery then moved there. The 1/27Inf, still attached to 1st Div, and 2/27th Inf secured Tay Ninh Base. A decision was made to open the road from Soui Da to Bau Co to save helicopters wear. Gen. Weyand was also concerned with the threat to the Division's rear from the Boi Loi-Ho Bo complex, and he detached the 2/22d (M) Inf from the 3rd Brigade, 4th Infantry Division (now 3rd Brigade, 25th Infantry Div) and moved it to the Cu Chi area, and attached to 25th Division 11 November. It then arrived at Bau Co along with two artillery batteries.

The 2/14<sup>th</sup> Inf, ran ops from Bau Co base from 11-13 Nov. The 1/27<sup>th</sup> Inf assaulted on 12 Nov to set up a base to search an area hit by B-52s. 1<sup>st</sup>/5th Inf (Mech) ran an S&D north of Bau Co and set up a base on 12 Nov, later named FSB One. On 13 Nov the 1<sup>st</sup>/5th (M) Inf followed up another B-52 strike. The 2/27<sup>th</sup> Inf moved to Bau Co base on 12 Nov. Also same day, the 196th was released from 1st Inf Div. 4/31st Inf moved east of Nui Ba Den on 12 Nov & stayed until 18 Nov to secure the road. On the 12th, it established three Co-sized bases north of Go Dau Ha and Bao Do from which to run ops south of Boi Loi Woods. At dawn it was ordered to secure the Route 22 bypass near the Cau Khoi Plantation to open the road from Dau Tieng to Tay Ninh. The 2/22d Inf (M) made this move on the 13<sup>th</sup>. 2nd Bde was directed to start ops astride Route 4 to Katum and prepare to move north and seize objectives near the Cambodian border, or to move southeast to seize Bo Duc. The 2/22 Inf was attached to 2nd Bde on 14 Nov, and 2/1st Inf (196th Bde) took the mission of guarding the Rte 22 Bypass and the plantation.

FSB Two was established by the 1/5<sup>th</sup> (Mech) and the 2/22 (M) Inf, on 15 Nov and two Arty batteries moved in. The base at Bau Co was closed on the 17<sup>th</sup> and the 2/14<sup>th</sup> Inf moved back to Tay Ninh. On 18 Nov, 1/5<sup>th</sup> (Mech) drove north and arrived near the border on the 19<sup>th</sup>. Co A had a firefight en route resulting in 11 VC killed. The 1/27<sup>th</sup> Inf moved from FSB 1 to FSB 2. A series of assaults followed from Nov. 20<sup>th</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup>. The 2/14<sup>th</sup> assaulted on the 20<sup>th</sup> to where the 2nd/22<sup>nd</sup> (Mech) Inf had its firefight Nov 19. They ran another on Nov 21 to set up a FSB supporting the aero-rifle Platoon which was to exploit a B-52 strike also near the border. The 1/27<sup>th</sup> Inf assaulted Nov 21 and again Nov 23. It was decided not to move 1st/5<sup>th</sup> (Mech) southeast of Bo Duc. Instead, 2/27<sup>th</sup> air assaulted on 22 Nov. On 23 Nov, 1/5<sup>th</sup> (Mech) moved back to FSB 1, and FSB 2 was secured with one Co on the 24<sup>th</sup>. Most units moved back to base camp the 24<sup>th</sup>. ATTLEBORO ended 25 Nov for all units except 1/5<sup>th</sup> Inf (M), which continued reconning east of Trai Bi. Division officials felt that the main VC Force in its area was the 70th Regt and a Recon and Security unit of COSVN (Central Office for South Vietnam). Other NLF Forces in both the 1st and 25th Inf Div's AOs were the 70th VC Regt and the 101st NVA Regt.

ATTLEBORO resulted in 254 VC KIA (BC), 237 VC KIA (poss), 6 VC captured, 60 VCS [?], 19 detainees, and vast supplies of food, weapons, ammunition, and equipment captured and/or destroyed.

Info From Official Records: ATTLEBORO introduced the first large-scale, multi-organization op, albeit unintentionally, responding to the VC 9th Div's Tay Ninh campaign. ATTLEBORO proved that within hours, multiple Bns from several Divisions and Brigades with good logistic support could deploy and commit to immediate combat [i.e. "pile on" – ed.] It proved that large-scale operations, involving up to the majority of forces available in a corps zone, have a place in counter-insurgency warfare and can effectively destroy large enemy forces, equipment, and major base areas.

ARTILLERY COMMANDER'S ANALYSIS: The major part of ATTLEBORO supported by the DIVARTY was a RIF north into War Zone C by a reinforced Brigade. Artillery support for the operation involved positioning batteries within fire bases secured by infantry battalions, and as the operation progressed, establishing new fire bases within artillery range of existing fire bases. Medium artillery was used in the mutually supporting fire bases as far into War Zone C as roads permitted. However, most of the operation was supported by direct support 105mm howitzer batteries, which were employed in two battery fire bases with an artillery control HQs. During the op, an extensive H&I program was developed. Intel derived from forward observer reports, visual recon flights, long range patrol reports, agent reports and other reconnaissance means were used as a basis for the program. Indications are that the H&I program was highly effective and as the op progressed it was further intensified.

From the "Vietnam Study" volume entitled Cedar Falls and Junction City: It was not only the number of U.S. and allied troops eventually involved which made ATTLEBORO a large operation. There was also during Nov a total of over 1,600 close air support sorties flown, expending nearly 12,000 tons of ordnance (225 were

B-52 sorties carrying all together 4,000 tons). Cargo aircraft flew 3,300 sorties in transporting 8,900 tons cargo and 11,500 passengers during the period 18 Oct-26 Nov. The enemy left 1,106 dead on the battlefield and had 44 captured. Friendly losses were 155 killed and 494 wounded.) Later military intelligence reports confirmed the high casualties sustained by the enemy, listing 2,130 killed- including over 1,000 by air strikes, almost 900 WIA, and over 200 missing or captured. HQs COSVN was reported struck by B-52s more than once, destroying great quantities of supplies, equipment, and documents. Four VC Bn Commanders and 5 Co Cmdrs were reported killed in the operation.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### Historical Reflections thru 1966

From U.S. Army In A Global Era. Ch 10: THE US ARMY IN VIETNAM, BACKGROUND, BUILDUP, AND OPERATIONS, 1950-1967: the defense of Saigon was the first duty of the 1st Infantry Div ("Big Red One") as well as of the 25th Infantry Div, which arrived in the

Winter [January-April] of 1966. The 1st Infantry Division took up a position protecting the northern approaches, blocking Highway 13 from the Cambodian border. The 25th guarded the western approaches, chiefly Highway 1 and the Saigon River. The two brigades of the 25th Division served also as a buffer between Saigon and the enemy's base areas in Tay Ninh Province. Westmoreland hoped, however, that the 25th Division would loosen the insurgents' tenacious hold on Hau Nghia Province as well. Here, American soldiers found to their amazement that the division's camp at Cu Chi had been constructed atop an extensive Viet Cong tunnel complex. Extending over several miles, this subterranean network, one of several in the region, contained hospitals, command centers, and storage sites. The complex, though partially destroyed, was never completely eliminated and remained usable by the enemy for the duration of the war. The 25th Inf Division worked closely with ARVN and paramilitary forces throughout 1966 and 1967 to pacify Hau Nghia Prov, and to secure its own base, but suppressing insurgency proved as difficult as eradicating the tunnels at Cu Chi.

From Stemming The Tide, CMH, 2000. "Whatever the hopes of senior American commanders, the allied contingent in South Vietnam was essentially on the defensive through 1966. No matter how the goal of operations such as MASHER / WHITE WING, PAUL REVERE, and EL PASO were phrased, Americans were in a buildup mode. The brigades and divisions present had to concentrate on providing security either for units that would follow or for those involved in opening roads, improving ports, building air bases and other installations . . . If search and destroy were the preferred tactic for large American units during 1965 and 1966, the end most often served was that of keeping the Communists at bay by thwarting their attempts to mass formations, demolishing their supply caches and base camps, cutting their lines

of infiltration into the south, and spoiling their plans to seize important harvests." (p. 356)

\* \* \* \* \*

#### **4<sup>TH</sup> BATTALION / 23<sup>RD</sup> INFANTRY MECHANIZES**

Late 66 - Early 67 brought a big change for the Tomahawks and the 25th Inf Div. Having some many members with previous exper-ience as a mech unit during its service in Alaska, the **4/23rd** was chosen to be the first unit to make the "Mech switch". It was felt that with just slight refresher training, the Bn could quickly be turned into mech infantry. 93 diesel M113 APCs were scheduled to arrive in Cu Chi by New Year, and **4 Battalion 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry (Mech)** began preparing for the changeover immediately so that mech ops could begin without delay. Dump trucks, tractors and men from the 65th Engineer Bn cleared an area which was to be the new motor pool, then dumped and paved hard layers of dirt throughout the tract of land. Drivers for the new tracks began training, wheeled vehicles turned in, and infantrymen oriented themselves on mech infantry tactics. All officers and men anxiously awaited the new equipment.

Background on armor/mech: Conventional wisdom/ US Army doctrine at the time of the initial decision to "go big" was that the terrain in RVN was either too marshy or too rugged for tracked vehicles to operate successfully. Actual experience in 1965-66 showed that the land in many areas was both flat and remained dry enough most of the time, so the additional combat power of armored vehicles had significant positive effect. Additional armored/mechanized forces came to be SOUGHT rather than shunned. The MACOV study of late 66-early 67 points to the need for doctrine to catch up with operations as the M113 was increasingly (exclusively) used in the role of mounted combat fighting vehicle, a role heretofore doctrinally reserved for tanks. That study also discussed the paradoxical role-reversal of tanks and infantry, as mech infantry increasingly found and fixed the enemy and armored cavalry or armor supported in their destruction.

**OPERATION ALA MOANA** ( 1 Dec- undetermined) became the first test of **4/23 Infantry (Mechanized)**, supporting 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade on a S&D mission at Duc Lap for five days. The TOMAHAWKS proved their flexibility as they accounted for one VC KIA (BC), four VC KIA (possible), VC/NVA PW and 55 detainees. They also destroyed many bunkers, foxholes and tunnels in addition to capturing 1,800 lbs of rice.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Feb 6, 03*

*Marge, -- No I actually went to Nam in September 1966 to work on M-48 and M-60 Tanks and wound up going over to Charlie Company, 4th of& 23rd, when they went mechanized, to help train them. I stayed with Charlie Company until the end of October 1967 before I got to come back. I stayed out in the field with them and went every place they did while I was in country. The good old Ho Bo and Boi Woods and*

Tay Ninh area. At least we had the M-113A1s to drive around in as opposed to the gas tracks the 5th Mech was using. RPGs and gasoline was not a nice mixture. See Ya,  
Bob Chisholm

Apr 20, 04

Neil.....Remember the landing strip at Vo Dat? Every time those darn planes came it sprayed that red crappy mud all over the place and made everything a rust color.

T.F. Tomahawk '65 - '68  
Bill Heddleson

Arpil (? )[date garbled] –

Yes, I remember that rust color. That was also the color of my wash cloth, when I got to Hong Kong from Vo Dat, via Cui Chi by Helo, thence to Saigon by armed truck convoy, ad piston powered DC 6 in late Jul 66. One would think there would be a more direct way of doing things, but that was not the case. It ALL sort of worked like that.

Neil

Aug 19

I was platoon leader of platoon that lost Sgt. Mauldin, McTurk, and Capt. Andrews. Got in a mine field that day (Sept. 3) and lost a lot of men (over 20). I still don't know who was wounded and who was killed. Most went out of country, never to return. I also was the one who traded a jeep for a 100 KW generator with an Air Force Colonel from Thailand that I met in O Club at Saigon. Lt. Heeney was the person who stole the supplies from the docks, including a beer cooler that was assigned to a General from the 9th Cav. Thanks for the memories! I remember most of which you talked.

Jim Kopp

Oct 26, 04

Reference the 4.2 Mortar Carrier. I was in the 4.2 mortar platoon in Germany, with the 11th Armored Cavalry, from January 1960 thru July 1964. I was a driver for the squad vehicle and the track was a M59 Mortar Carrier. It had a 3 way folding roof, almost half of the top of the vehicle, the ground mount base plate was mounted on the outside of the vehicle, a real bitch to set up in a hurry. There was a crew of 5 on the vehicle and they were the Squad Leader, Driver, Gunner, Asst. Gunner and ammo bearer/loader. We carried a basic load of 70 rounds of HE and Smoke rounds on the vehicle, 35 on each side of the interior. The track had a 50 Cal mounted on the Squad Leaders hatch and each man had his personal weapon. The track was powered by twin 150 horsepower GMC engines, gasoline I'm sad to say, and if they were synchronized correctly and tuned up real good you could keep up with the M151 jeep on the open highway, they could fly.

I'm not sure if that was the carrier that they had in Vietnam in 1966-1967 but as the forward observer for 1st Platoon, C Company, 4/23rd I would not use the 4.2 mortars. [The 4.2tracks in RVN had a diesel variant.- ed] The ammo they had at that time was pre-world war 2 rounds and they were not reliable. We had many



*cases of the powder charges not burning correctly and this could throw the round off up to 1,000 to 1,500 meters from where they were supposed to land. I'm not sure but I may have a few pictures of the M59 Mortar Carrier somewhere in my old photo albums and if I can find one I will try and get it on the web site. No guarantees though for I've spent up to a year or more trying to find certain pictures from 22 years in the Army.*

*Art Stevenson*

*C Company, 4/23 Infantry, Class of 66-67*

*Oct 26, 04*

*Hello Art! -- As one of the persons that went to pick up tracks at docks I can say none of the tracks that were picked up were twin engines running gasoline. All our tracks had one engine that ran on diesel. As for the ammo they used that's true, it was crap left over from Korea. but they didn't have a corner on that, as I remember we got a lot of that also in the 81 mm Mortar Plat. I don't remember what the number were on the ammo that we got , but the powder didn't burn right on a lot of it. It came out the tube and at times it would barely clear the perimeter.. And the case were marked for Korea. It would come out the tube and you could watch the WP rounds and HE rounds tumble as it would go to target area. Hell one run barely clear the tube and landed on the ramp of one of the tracks that fired it. I remember one time we took all ammo stack it and blown it in place. That was after we got a load of the new M374 & M375 ammo. Well that's all I got to say.*

*Bob Smith C Co FDC*

*Mar 1, 06*

*All tracks were Diesel. I went to pick them up at the Docks on X-MAS and New Years Eve. All the OVM was in Wood Box's along with the 50"s inside the Tracks. As far as I remember we never had any gassers and I left the unit in Oct 67. Other unit's from other Div. had gassers. Like triple nickel (555) [triple deuce 2/22<sup>nd</sup> ??] I don't remember which Division they were in or I may not have their unit right. When I was there some line plat tracks carried Gas inside for the portable flame throwers. That I know for a fact when a RPG went inside one that had it ramp down and set in on fire . Light up the whole unit that night.*

*Bob S.*

*Aug 31, '11*

*Fellows:*

*The 1/5 Infantry claims to have introduced the first armor protection for their tracks before deploying to Vietnam. Good story here. You may recall that when we had a draft any young man between 18 and 26 had to register. That included foreign nationals holding green cards. A lot of German mechanics sent by Volkswagen to the USA when VW was expanding their dealerships got drafted. I had one in my training company at Ft. Eustis.\* The 1/5 Mech had a German draftee named Alfred Hohmann. He was concerned with the safety of the TC, fully exposed or partly exposed, depending on how the seat was adjusted up or down. Alfred was a welder and he put together a prototype on one track. The CO liked it and they went into*

production 24/7 cranking out cupolas made out of scrounged sheet iron. When they shipped out all their tracks had them.

Alfred lives in Germany today and is a member of the 5th Infantry Chapter and the 25th Inf Div Assn. He came to one of our reunions, I think it was Pittsburgh in 2005, and we presented him with a certificate of appreciation for his idea, initiative and labors to provide a measure of protection to his guys.

Butch Sincock

Dec 3, 09

Bob Hope was at Cu Chi for Christmas 1966. We were down at the docks picking up our new tracks. After we drove them back we were told to shower and be in the motor pool in 30 minutes where we were put on trucks and brought to the show. Quite a show from what I can remember.

Jim H. 66/67

[Ed note – even though it was technically a” truce”, a LOT, perhaps most, of the division’s infantrymen spent part of all of the time outside the wire, providing security for the base camp.]

\* \* \* \* \*

From 1966 Year End Press Statement by Wm. Westmoreland:

February, 1967 " . . . .The enemy was hurt in many area during 1966, and his principle concentrations in the DMZ, Chu Pong Region, and in Tay Ninh - Bien Long were pre-empted by allied operations that inflicted heavy losses. However, the enemy strength increased in 1966 by an estimated 42,000 men, indicating he is more than capable of replacing losses by infiltration and recruitment."

\* \* \* \* \*

"By the end of 1966 sufficient forces had been deployed, together with the logistic support, so that the total allied military establishment was in a position for the first time to go over to the offensive . . . in 1967". William Westmoreland in Report On The War In Vietnam (As Of 30 June 1958) coauthored with Adm U.S.G. Sharp, 1968.

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## **1967: YEAR OF THE "BIG BATTLES"**

Gen. Westmoreland termed it "The Year of the Offensive."

At the beginning of 1967, the US military had 391,000 people in-country. It was the year General Westmoreland had expected to have sufficient forces to begin a countrywide offense and seize the tactical initiative from the enemy. Viewed in retrospect, this actually occurred beginning with Op Attleboro, November 1966. That unexpected opportunity arose in which we realized (and were able to) bring vastly superior firepower and mobility to bear and exact heavy losses on the enemy. Even though Attleboro was unplanned (too early), it set the pattern for the series of Operations through mid-1967 which were heavily planned.

**On 24 January, 1967 John A. Lambie Jr., Charlie Company, was KIA (accidental self destruction)**

\* \* \* \* \*

### **BACKGROUND**

These were two operations in early 1967 initially planned as multi-division ops, hence "big." They marked a planned turning point in the conflict in both inertia and tactical doctrine. The conditions which led to this turning point had been developing over the years from the time of the withdrawal of the French from Indochina in 1954 until ATTLEBORO in late 1966.

Shortly after Op BIRMINGHAM in May 66, Gen William Westmoreland directed Lt Gen Jonathan Seaman, CG, II Field Force, to plan an operation for War Zone C in northern Tay Ninh Province to start soon after the Christmas and New Year stand-downs of 66- 67. He further required that it be a "big operation," multi-divisional, and include a parachute assault. Over the next several months the op to be known as JUNCTION CITY was planned. The next big op approved by Gen Westmoreland, however, was to start on 8 Jan 67, would not be JUNCTION CITY, but Operation CEDAR FALLS. We would first address the Iron Triangle, THEN War Zone C.

As II Field Force troop strength built up in 1966 and it became more capable of attacking the enemy in longtime havens, Gen. Seaman's HQs considered the possibility of a decisive strike into the Iron Triangle, an area generally defined on its southwest axis by Saigon River, on its east by Thi Tinh River, and on the north by a line running west from Ben Cat to Ben Suc on the Saigon River. To the north lies the Thanh Dien Forestry Reserve. The Iron Triangle has been characterized as "a dagger pointed at Saigon" from only 20 km away, and the enemy's largest haven close to that city, much closer than other enemy-held areas of War Zone C. IRON TRIANGLE was heavily fortified and known to contain VC HQs for Military Region (MR) IV which directed military, political, and terrorist activities in the Saigon- Gia Dinh capital region complex. VC control of the Iron Triangle permitted enemy forces to dominate key transport routes in the capital area. This important center of enemy control and support had to be attacked decisively and in force if the attack were to succeed in rupturing and neutralizing the control structure.

Operation CEDAR FALLS was the first large scale op to benefit from "pattern activity analysis," a system begun in mid 1966. This procedure consisted of detailed

plotting on maps of enemy activity obtained from a variety of sources over an extended period of time. As more data were plotted, patterns emerged. It thereby became possible to focus prime attention on those areas of intensive or unusual enemy activity.

*Originally, JUNCTION CITY was to precede CEDAR FALLS. New intelligence, however, prompted Gen Seaman to reverse the order when it was learned that NLF HQs for Region IV (Saigon-area) was probably in the Iron Triangle at that time. Secondly, US 9th Inf Division would be in-country beginning mid-Jan to help take over some of the work load of units shifted to JUNCTION CITY, if it were postponed. Plus, it seemed more logical to attend to the closest-to-Saigon threat/opportunity, then radiate from there north and west into the established base areas of War Zone C/III CTZ.*

*JUNCTION CITY was planned with the commitment of as many as 22 U.S. Infantry Bns, 14 Artillery Bns, and four RVN Bns, and it would also include the first major combat parachute assault since the Korean War. The operation plan, originally named GADSDEN, had three major objectives: engage the 9th VC Division and the 101st NVA Regt; destroy COSVN HQs; and destroy enemy base camps and installations in the AO. The plans included a parachute assault by both 1st Brigade 101st Abn Div, and 173d Airborne Bde. Among other objectives, the op was intended to convince the enemy that War Zone C was no longer a haven. The name "GADSDEN" was retained however, but became the name of an Operation to be conducted by the U.S. 25th Division in extreme W War Zone C, in the vicinity of Lo Go in northwest preceding JUNCT CITY, in Tay Ninh Province. The second preliminary op, named TUCSON, would be conducted by the U.S. 1st Inf Division in Binh Long Prov, 80 km to the east of Gadsden, in an area generally defined by the Minh Thanh and Michelin rubber plantations and the village of Bau Long on Highway 13. This area also comprised the northern part of Long Nguyen Secret Zone. The plans for JUNCTION CITY, GADSDEN, and TUCSON were published in early Dec 66. D-days were set as 3 Jan for GADSDEN and TUCSON and as 12 Jan for JUNCTION CITY. However, in mid- Dec, Gen. McChristian, MACV J-2, briefed Gen Seaman on information concerning enemy activities in Iron Triangle which led to the decision that CEDAR FALLS would be conducted in January. JUNCTION CITY would be postponed until later in Feb. In turn, GADSDEN was delayed until 2 Feb and TUCSON postponed until 14 Feb. The intel concerning War Zone C was continuously being re-examined, and in mid-Jan the movement and relocation of 9th VC Division and enemy Regts was established. 271st Regt was located on the Cambodian border near Lo Go; 272d Regt had moved to Michelin rubber plantation NE of Dau Tieng, and 273d Regt was now located outside War Zone C near Tan Uyen, about 25 mi NE of Saigon. 271st and 272d Regts were added as targets for GADSDEN and TUCSON. HQs 9th VC Division remained in the E sector of War Zone C while intel indicated the 101st NVA Regt -- now listed as subordinate to 9th Division -- had moved N to vicinity of An Loc and Loc Ninh. This new and significant information on enemy unit location resulted in a shift in the area of primary interest from the E to the W central part of War Zone C, and the target of major interest became the COSVN HQs elements.*

*[Ed note – these various ops and their timing are confusing. They can best be thought of as a cluster of operations from the west edge of War Zone C, NW of Saigon to the eastern edge of War Zone C, north of Saigon, including the Iron Triangle, that were all altered “on the fly” to address emerging threats and opportunities in the opening months of 1967.]*

*As envisioned by FFII (HQs, II Field Forces Vietnam) , preliminary ops GADSDEN and TUCSON, jumping off on 2 and 14 Feb respectively, would position forces and materiel on the western and eastern extremities of the JINCT CITY AO. Phase I of JUNCTION CITY would begin 22 February with five U.S. Brigades forming a horseshoe-shaped cordon in the west half of War Zone C. 25th Inf Division would block on the west and north along the Cambodian border. On the east, along Prov Rte 4 would be 1st Inf Division with 173d Bde (Abn) attached. On D + 1 a Bde of 25th Division with 11th Armored Cav Regt attached, positioned on the south edge of the horseshoe the previous day, would attack N into the horseshoe. These forces would conduct S&D ops in their areas. Simultaneous with their detailed and thorough search, a Special Forces and CIDG camp near Perk Kook would be established for future interdiction of enemy supply and infiltration routes in War Zone C and an airstrip capable of handling C-130's would be built at the camp. A second similar airfield would be constructed in the vicinity of Katum. During the operation, particular attention was to be devoted to searching suspected locations of the political and military elements of COSVN. A thorough interrogation of all persons apprehended was to be conducted. During Phase II, FFII elements would focus their attention on the east part of War Zone C, conducting S&D ops against COSVN, VC, and NVA forces and installations. The Saigon R. was to be bridged at its intersection with Route 246 west of An Loc. At that site a Special Forces and Civilian Irregular Defense Group camp with an airstrip for C-130s was to be built. In Phase III, Junction City would be reduced to a Bde-size operation in the vicinity of Tay Ninh City in southern War Zone C.*

OPCON for this phase would be passed from II Field Force to the 25<sup>th</sup> Inf Div. Op. JUNCTION City would demonstrate the ability of American forces to enter areas which had been VC sanctuaries to conduct successful S&D missions and build facilities in these strongholds. In addition, in the weeks forthcoming, each of the four enemy Regts under 9<sup>th</sup> VC Division would be met and defeated. In the emerging plan, 20 days before the beginning of JUNCTION CITY preliminary ops were to be started by the 25<sup>th</sup> Inf Division under code name Op GADSDEN. Twelve days later, on 14 Feb, the 1<sup>st</sup> Div's Operation TUCSON was to jump off. The primary objective of these ops was to positioning men and materiel on the W and E flanks of JUNCTION CITY AO; however, these would become significant in their own right.

\* \* \* \* \*

**4<sup>th</sup> Bn 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Tomahawks** took part in Operation Cedar Falls, OPCON 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, 25<sup>th</sup> division.

**OPERATION CEDAR FALLS** (8 Jan - 26 Jan 67) was the first intentionally-planned, multi-division op of the war. (ATTLEBORO just coincidentally turned out to be that way.) It was a blocking and S&D op along Saigon R. to prevent ex-filtration from the Thanh Dien Forestry Reserve and Iron Triangle, deny VC/NVA using Saigon R, and destroy VC HQs and bases, including COSVN.

On 6 Jan, 25<sup>th</sup> Division, under the guise of normal operations, deployed 196<sup>th</sup> Light Infantry Brigade, at the time attached to the 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. The 2/22(Mech) Infantry moved from Dau Tieng along the south edge of Boi Loi woods to an overnight position. At the same time 1<sup>st</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> (Mech), with Troop B,  $\frac{3}{4}$  Cavalry attached, moved into the area north of Trung Lap Ranger Training Center to open a route and secure FSBs. The 3/21<sup>st</sup> Inf and supporting arty, consisting of 3/82<sup>nd</sup> Arty, and A Btry, 2/77<sup>th</sup> Arty, were lifted into these bases. All elements, less the FSB security forces, moved to blocking positions along Saigon River. 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade moved north of Filhol Plantation and Nha Viec, with TF2/34<sup>th</sup> Armor in the north and Task Force 2/27<sup>th</sup> Infantry in the south. During the night, maximum ambushes were placed along the river. In daylight, minimum forces secured the river, allowing extensive search and destroy operations in VC bases. 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division controlled river traffic while 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division controlled the junction of Saigon-Thi Tinh Rivers. 1<sup>st</sup> Division, with 173<sup>rd</sup> Abn Brigade and 11<sup>th</sup> ACR, blocked escape routes across the Thi Than River, air-mobile assaulted north of the Iron Triangle, and then ran S&D operations south thru the area.

Totals for the 18-days were 21,385 tons rice captured, 331 VC killed (BC), 39 PWs, 147 Hoi Chanhs rallied, and 147 detainees held for questioning. Seven M-1 rifles, ten Mausers, six AK-47s, 18 pistols, two shotguns, one pellet gun, three rocket launchers, two BARs, three rounds of rocket ammo were captured, along with miscellaneous explosives, Bangalore torpedoes and grenades. TAC air sorties numbered 409 and there were five B-52 bomb strikes.

Info From Official Records: as previously outlined, CEDAR FALLS, began on 8 Jan 67 with the goal of destroying HQs areas, interdicting the movement of enemy forces into the major war zones in III Corps, & defeating NLF units camped there, especially focused on the Iron Triangle. Like ATTLEBORO, CEDAR FALLS tapped manpower and resources of nearly every major Army unit in III CTZ. A series of initial maneuvers brought Army units into position. Several air assaults sealed off Iron Triangle, exploiting natural barriers of rivers that formed two of its boundaries. Then US units began a series of sweeps to push VC toward the blocking forces. At the village of Ben Suc, long held by insurgents, 60 helicopters descended into seven landing zones in less than a minute. Ben Suc was surrounded, its entire population evacuated, and the village and tunnels destroyed. But - insurgent forces had fled before the assault. As CEDAR FALLS progressed, U.S. troops destroyed hundreds of enemy fortifications, captured large quantities of supplies and food, and evacuated other hamlets. Contact with the enemy was fleeting. Most of the VC, including the high-level COSVN, escaped, sometimes infiltrating through allied lines.

In addition to Military Region IV HQ's, other NLF units in the area were suspected to be 272<sup>d</sup> Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Bns of Military Region IV under 165<sup>th</sup>

VC Regiment, the Phu Loi Local Force Battalion, plus three local force Companies. (Although the suspected location of 272d Regiment presented a threat during initial stages of the Op, this unit moved north as the operation progressed. Other intel sources indicated the 2d, 3d, and 8th Bns of the 165th VC Regiment might also be encountered.

Thanh Dien forest and Iron Triangle were known to contain strongly fortified positions with routes of approach mined and booby trapped. The terrain in the area consists of dense forests and wet, open rice lands. Cover in rice paddies, marshes, and swamps is generally limited to road embankments and dikes. Fields of fire are poor in the forests. Vehicle movement is restricted to existing roads and some trails. What few slopes exist are very gentle; the highest points in the area do not exceed forty meters.

NAME AND TYPE OF OPERATION: **CEDAR FALLS** was a search & destroy and blocking op along SAIGON River to prevent exfiltration from THANH DIEN Forestry Reserve and IRON TRIANGLE areas and denying the use of the river in the sector to VC/NVA forces. This operation was conducted in two phases.

Phase I: (D Day) 25th Inf Division under the guise of normal ops deploys the 196th Bde (reinforced) by air and ground to seize critical ground overlooking SAIGON River in HO BO Woods and destroys VC/NVA forces and installations in sector.

(D+1 to D+9) 2nd Bde deployed by ground to blocking positions along SAIGON River. 2nd and 196th Brigades prevented VC/NVA exfiltration from THANH DIEN Forestry Reserve and IRON TRIANGLE, and controlled SAIGON R in their sectors to deny use by VC/NVA forces. Brigade blocking forces conducted detailed search of their sectors and destroyed VC/NVA forces/installations.

Special Equipment and Techniques: During the operation, Armor / Infantry units established multiple base camps and forward positions in FILHOL Plantation and HO BO and BOI LOI Woods. Up to this time there had been little or no target area survey because of the lack of high ground for a target area base and because of the requirement for an inordinate amount of security for isolated survey parties. Taking advantage of security offered by the forward bases and by using DMEs [Digital Measuring Equipment – ed.] with NUI BA DEN as a control base, the survey parties were able to establish control in areas that are frequently target areas.

8. (C) INTELLIGENCE: a.) General - The AO for 25th Inf Division during CEDAR FALLS encompassed the area from south of BOI LOI Woods to a line 4 km east of PHU HOA DONG. The division positions were located along SAIGON River in former [the writer was apparently an optimist – ed.] VC safe havens in both the HO BO Woods and FILHOL Plantation. Enemy units operating in and around the AO included the 1st, 2nd, 7th, and 8th Bns of 165th A Regiment, elements of D 14 Local Forces Battalion, elements of MR 4, and local guerrillas. The area contained many foxholes, trenches, tunnels, bunkers and underground fortifications. The VC used SAIGON River. to a great extent in moving supplies and equipment. b.) Terrain varied from broad, flat plains of wet rice land to scrub brush and forested areas with heavy canopy. Cover in rice paddies, marshes, and swamps was limited to road

embankments and dikes. Concealment in rice land was poor, with fair to good concealment in the forests and high marsh grass area. Fields of fire were poor in the forest to generally good in the rice lands and marshes. However, fields of fire were limited by stream banks and vegetation. Obstacles to overland movement were interconnecting streams, ditches, and dikes in the rice land marshes. c.) Weather during the operation was generally clear to partly cloudy with good visibility and light winds. The max temp was 93 degrees and the min was 63 degrees with an average high of 86 and low of 68. Total rainfall for the period was .2 in. d.) Operations: Light enemy contact was made initially as friendly units moved to occupied blocking positions in HO BO Woods and FILHOL Plantation. In extreme E part of the division sector, heavy contact was made with 2nd Bn, 165 A Regt on 8 Jan 67 by elements of 1/27<sup>th</sup> Inf. The enemy encountered by 1/27<sup>th</sup> Infantry withdrew in darkness the night of 8 - 9 Jan. Throughout the remainder of the op no other heavy contact was made with the enemy forces, and most of the body count resulted from contacts with small groups of VC. During darkness, maximum use was made of ambushes along the SAIGON River, and several VC were killed by ambush patrols as they sought to escape from the CEDAR FALLS AO. S&D Operations accounted for most of the daylight activity of friendly forces. Through these S&D ops, several VC base camps along with large amounts of rice, equipment, ammo and weapons were located. A large tunnel complex was discovered by 1/5<sup>th</sup> (Mech) Infantry in the HO BO Woods on 21 January at coordinates XT650235, The tunnel is believed to have been the location of a VC HQs unit. It was destroyed after it had been fully searched.

\* \* \* \* \*

Maj Gen McChristian [MACV G-2] summed up CEDAR FALLS's intelligence value as: "... the "biggest intelligence breakthrough in the war." During the course of the action in the Iron Triangle, 213 enemy were detained and, in addition, 512 suspects and 518 ralliers were held for interrogation. All the intel these sources provided was relayed at once to commanders in the field and to MACV. Twelve valuable sources were sent to the Combined Military Interrogation Center for further exploitation by U.S. and RVN Intel. Among the CEDAR FALLS detainees interrogated at the combined center was the ops officer of MR IV who was captured carrying about two lbs of documents. Another important detainee, a high-level VC political cadre member, was initially uncooperative. He made the mistake of bragging about his background as a graduate of Moscow University, however, and the J-2 computers in Saigon soon produced his complete personal history statement. Many of the region intel files we captured had detailed accounts of its activities from 1962 to 1966; contained Viet Cong unit strength figures, personnel rosters, AOs assigned specific units; and yielded valuable data on future op. In addition, 2000 personal history statements of Communist cadre members were seized, leading to the arrest of a number of enemy agents operating in Saigon and other areas. Perhaps the most significant find was a copy of the 12th resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist party of NVN which first announced direct intervention in RVN by NVA. In all, over 490,000 pages of captured documents were sent to the Combined Document Exploitation Center more than 52,000 of these were found to be of significant intelligence value . . . .



“The Viet Cong themselves later admitted in highly classified reports that the Op constituted a disaster for them. The over-all intelligence value of the Operation was unparalleled in the records of U.S. military efforts in Vietnam up to that time. Aside from all this, CEDAR FALLS was important as an outstanding example of the manner and means of intelligence support from the inception to the conclusion of a combat operation. The success of such ops in a war in which sound intelligence meant so much reflected the close cooperation between tactical units and the intelligence elements supporting them. All parties demonstrated a mutual understanding of requirements and the capabilities and limitations involved in the collection, processing, and use of intelligence.”

\* \* \* \* \*

*Re: TV program on Op Cedar Falls*

*Nov 15, 05*

*I had recorded it on my Dish receiver & went back & looked at it again today, think I saw some 1st plt guys but not sure. Couldn't see track # but U S Army # was 12GB33 if any of you 1st plt guys wanna look up your photos & check them. My track( A 51) was 12GB39. This portion of the film was Operation Cedar Falls when we took the Base camp that had a hosp. in it. Fred & Greg & you other guys that were there will remember the bunkers had a mound of dirt in the middle they used as operating tables & they were completely blood soaked. I forgot his name but the Plt. Sgt. 1st Plt was KIA in this battle. He was the one that had already been shot in the head & survived. Even on the films we're hardly mentioned, mostly Big Red 1 & 173rd.*

*Roy*

\* \* \* \* \*

**OPERATION GADSDEN** (2 - 21 Feb 1967) was a multi-Brigade U.S. search and destroy operation in Tay Ninh Province along the Cambodian border designed to expose and deny VC movement along well established routes. It kicked off on 2 February by elements of 25th Infantry Division, including **4<sup>th</sup> Bn (Mech) 23d Inf** and other units of US II Field Force.

*During the 19 days, the operation captured/destroyed six AK-47s and M-79s, two machine guns, six carbines and Mausers, one M-14, one shotgun, three rocket launchers, 7,850 rounds SA ammo, seven lbs TNT, assorted commo equipment, 19 bicycles, and large amounts of kerosene, tar, clothing, and maps were captured. In addition 161 VC were killed and two POWs taken. There were 347 sorties flown in air support, and numerous B-52 bomb strikes.*

From After Action Report/Lessons Learned: Operation GADSDEN was an S&D and Blocking op along the CAMBODIAN border to prevent exfiltration/infiltration along that border, and destroy VC/NVA supplies and base camps. Intel: a.) General: Enemy units in area include elements of 9<sup>th</sup> VC Division (271st Regt & 272 Regt), 70th Guard Regt, the 680th Training Regt, and elements of COSVN HQ to include

several medical units. The AO contained extensive supply and ammo caches, commo storage areas, hospital facilities, base camps and training complexes. VC were expected to fortify area against ground and air mobile assaults. The extensive facilities and well developed trails and roads indicated that this was an important VC logistic/training base. Agent reports, PWs, HOI CHANHs, Visual Recon, LRRPs and USSF [Special Forces – ed.] Reports were used. b.) Terrain varied from low /flat and cultivated fields to scrub brush and forested areas with double and triple canopy that offered excellent concealment and poor observation. Avenues of approach were generally limited to trails and cleared areas. Obstacles: streams, dense forest, heavy mud in paddy areas near the river. Moving foot troops and tracked vehicles proved less difficult than encountered on 7ATTLEBORO due to much previously flooded area in the AO having dried. c.) Weather was generally clear/partly cloudy with good visibility and light wind. Total rainfall was .01 inch..

On 3 Feb, 2/22 (Mech) engaged an est NLF platoon. On 3 Feb, Recon Plt, 1/5<sup>th</sup> (Mech) received SA, AW and RR fire from 15-20 VC. The VC wore mixed camouflage uniforms and black pajamas, and fought with determination, discipline, and fire control.

On Feb 4, Alpha Company 4<sup>th</sup> of the 31st Inf received SA, AW and rifle grenade fire from 8-10 VC. After a moderate exchange, the VC withdrew. That evening, 2/1<sup>st</sup> Inf rec'd 50 rounds of 82mm mortar in their battalion area, sustaining light casualties. Earlier in the day they had captured a training model of a rocket launcher. This was the first of several indications that the GADSDEN AO was an enemy main force training ground.

On 5 Feb A Company, 1<sup>st</sup> Bn (Mech) 5<sup>th</sup> Inf received heavy SA, AW and rifle grenade fire from an unknown number VC. Fifteen VC were KIA and one Chicom type 57 heavy MG taken, indicating a Co-size unit or larger, but no unit ID could be made from the equipment or documents captured. Same day, A/2/22 (Mech) located a large cache containing documents identifying elements of 1st and 2nd Battalions, 70th VC Regiment. **Kenneth D. Roberts, Alpha Company was KIA this day.**

On 6 Feb, 2/22<sup>nd</sup> Infantry (M) received AW, SA and rifle grenade fire from an unknown number of VC who were fighting from underground fortifications and put up a determined effort before breaking contact. Same day Recon 1/5<sup>th</sup> Inf (M) captured documents in a VC base camp identifying a local guerilla unit that ran a dispensary in the area, This dispensary's presence, along with discovery of medical facilities and medical supply caches indicated the VC were using the area for R&R.

On 7 Feb, A and C companies 1<sup>st</sup> Bn 5<sup>th</sup> Inf (M) took rifle grenades and heavy SA and AW fire from an est VC Plt. Air strikes and Arty supported the action resulting in 20 VC KIA. Bunkers and 18 tons of rice were located. Also on 7 Feb, 2/1<sup>st</sup> Infantry located and destroyed a VC training area consisting of a large obstacle course, stockade and an elaborate land navigation course. Docs identified 680th Training Regt and elements of 3rd Bn 272nd VC Regiment, which had been suspected of training in the area.

From 8-12 Feb (Tet Truce) US forces occupied their battalion bases astride VC supply and infiltration routes and patrolled in their areas of responsibility to deter VC activity. There were 6 violations against US forces, involving fire from the Cambodian side of the river. This included **Recon Plt, 4th Bn (M), 23rd Inf** received SA and rifle grenade fire vic WT967715. Fire was returned. **4/23rd Recon Plt** was significant in this operation as they located an ammo cache and documents referring to a local VC Finance and Economy Agency.

**Gerald D. Fetkether of HHC was KIA on 8 February.** Also on 8 Feb, 1/5th Inf was engaged by an unknown number of VC and captured documents referring to a local medical facility.

**On 9 February, John C. Howland of Alpha Company was KIA.**

On 10 February, 1<sup>st</sup>/5th (M) located a sophisticated training area consisting of 44 structures and fortifications, two classrooms, two mess halls, and a 75 X 30 meter rifle range complete with silhouette targets. GADSDEN's final phase saw attacks and sweeps following intel regarding VC activities.

On 13 Feb, 1<sup>st</sup> Bn 5<sup>th</sup> Infantry destroyed an ordinance facility containing bombs, artillery rds, and grenades, as well as tools and molds for fabricating ordinance. On 16 Feb a Chieu Hoi rallied to the 2/22<sup>nd</sup> Infantry and supplied intelligence regarding local guerilla activities. On 18 Feb, 2/77 Arty and 2/22(M) Infantry received 50 rds 82mm mortar fire.

On 21 February, 3 Bn 22<sup>nd</sup> Infantry engaged an unknown number VC. Captured documents held several references to the 70th NLF Regiment and a medical unit.

In the first six days of Operation Gadsden, two brigade sized infantry elements uncovered 16 enemy base camps and two enemy supply bases. The camps ranged from company to battalion sized. They yielded 10 small arms, and almost 255 tons of rice, 321 structures and 336 fortifications, After breaking through foxholes and trench lines, the three Mech and three standard infantry Bns found billets, mess halls, classrooms, storerooms and dispensaries. After evacuating contents, each facility was destroyed.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Mar 27, 07*

*As an RTO I got to stay in the track and best of all no KP. Remember rigging a poncho up like a pup tent over the copula when it rained. I also remember this after getting the tracks. Riding and not walking with the radio. Carrying extra food in the track and not just what I could carry. I started gaining weight.*

*Don Hansen*

*Jul 20, 04*

*During the operation just prior to Junction City (Feb 67), the 4/23rd moved north of Tay Ninh and West to the border. We found a recently evacuated underground*

*hospital -- in it we found Red Chinese magazines (dated less than two months old) and money. We also found Russian money and documents. Division intel flew out immediately to get all that we found.*

*Apparently, the VC, etc, were driven just over the border by our approach. Not too much of a skirmish. They returned frequently the next few days to try and put Chicom claymores on our perimeter.*

*There was a bridge about one foot under the river's water that led to Cambodia. Bits and pieces of memories.*

*Jim*

*Jul 20, 04*

*Hey Jim - That was Op Gadsden. I remember vividly an incident involving pigs in a recently deserted camp & bunker complex just inside a woodline. Some guys went in there, and suddenly you heard all kind of pig squealing, followed by yelling and cursing, and you could see GIs racing first one direction then another like a Keystone Kops movie. Capt Huggins was about 50 yards away on top of a track, leapt off, and strode toward the battle shouting "don't chase 'em – shoot em!" Semi- and full-auto fire ensued, and all was quiet. That night there was a barbecue over open (enemy) pits using breaker bars as a grate. I believe the Recon Plt also had a cross border exchange of fire on that Op during the Tet 67 truce. The night before or maybe it was the next night, the A Co sector of the line lit up with all weapons firing a waterfall of tracers, etc. When word went around what happened, an ambush from another sector set out and crossed their front, but they didn't get the word. One guy was wounded and evacuated in the dark by helo, guided by flashlights. Also seeing boxes full of captured medicines, many with French labels.*

*Neil*

*Jul 21, 04*

*Couldn't resist responding to your letter to Jim regarding Operation Gadsden. I also remember the wild pig battle. Once the pigs were killed, some of the senior NCO's who were from the south, cleaned and dressed the pigs prior to placing them in pits which we dug for the big meal. The pigs were placed in the pits and cooked sorta Hawaiian style for several hours until ready to eat. I must tell you that was the finest pork I've eaten in my whole life. Told my wife about the BBQ many times and to see it show up here was really neat. Are you in agreement that the food was mighty fine that day?*

*Eddie L.*

*Aug 13, 04*

*Tropic Lightning Strikes VC Twice (27 Feb 67 news article)*

*“ Even though they say that lightning never strikes twice in the same place, the men of Co. **B, 4th Bn. (Mech), 23rd Inf.**, recently proved that at least one form of lightning - "Tropic Lightning" - does. For the second clay in a row during Operation "Gadsden" **Co. B** moved into a well hidden, but deserted Viet Cong base camp in War Zone "C" near Tay Ninh. The Tropic Lightning infantrymen were forced to leave the camp the first day in order to get their armored personnel carriers (APCs) positioned in a safe place prior to darkness.*

*“ Early the second day the company's APCs moved back to the deserted VC base camp to continue their search of the area. After positioning the tracks in a defensive perimeter around the base camp, the men dismounted and began searching the camp. "We got off the tracks and began poking our noses into every bunker and trench we came to," said Sp4 Woodrow E. Calvert Jr., 20, of Charleston, W. Va. As the day progressed, reports of finds of clothing and small quantities of rice began floating into the company command post. Exasperated because he hadn't personally found anything, Sp4 Calvert made his way into the last bunker. Climbing tiredly into the well-built fortification, he began probing the dirt floor for any hidden treasures.*

*"I was really taken by surprise when the point of my machete struck against something metal. At first I thought I had found some mortar rounds or something like that," said Sp4 Calvert. Instead, what the specialists found was 175 cans of sardines. In addition to the sardines, several other miscellaneous items were discovered and evacuated from the ill-fated base camp.*

*“After the captured items were all moved from the vicinity, the company moved from the area and the base camp was destroyed. Tropic Lightning may not be the same as regular lightning, but as far as Viet Cong base camps are concerned, the results can be much the same.*

*===== lost info*

*APC Hangs on Edge of Pit;*

*“Outcome Is in The Balance*

*“Men of the 2nd Plt., **Co. B, 4th Bn. (Mech.), 23rd Inf.**, recently learned the art of balancing an armored personnel carrier (APC) the hard way.*

*“The action occurred during operation "Gadsden" conducted in the jungles of War Zone C, 65 miles northwest of Saigon. Crashing through the heavy undergrowth, one of the platoon's APCs, or "tracks," came upon an anti-tank pit. Too late to change directions, the driver, PFC Roger Evans, 20, of Chico, Calif., braked the vehicle, balancing it on the edge of the pit. The quick reaction kept the vehicle from plunging into the pit and avoided damage and injury.*

*“ Suddenly the front of the APC began to rise sharply in the air and just as suddenly dropped. PFC Evans immediately applied the brakes. The momentum of the track threw everyone forward and PFC Anthony Blanchard fell over the front and into chest-deep water. "Don't breathe," said SSgt. Rufus J. Elliott, platoon sergeant for the 2nd Plt., and the situation was just that critical.*

*“The APC was almost vertical, nose down and still eight feet from the bottom of the pit. The slightest movement could send it plunging to the bottom. Sgt. Elliott immediately grabbed the radio microphone and called for help. Soon a track appeared and pulled them to safety.”*

***“Mech Drops in on Cong, Just in Time for Lunch***

*"Sorry about that." said Capt Little, "but I guess Charlie just couldn't stay for lunch today."*

*“Capt. William W. Little, commanding officer of **Co. B, 4th Bn. (Mech.), 23rd Inf.**, had just led his men into a VC base camp at high noon and interrupted the enemy's*

*lunch break. Freshly cleaned chickens were strewn everywhere and pots were heating up over untended fires as the men of the "Tomahawks" roared into the deserted camp. The camp was discovered while the unit was taking part in Operation "Gadsden" in the dense jungles of War Zone C, about 20 miles northwest of Tay Ninh. One of the track commanders joked, "It looks as if Charles isn't home."*

*" He and his men dismounted to search a bunker and trench system. The search parties turned up 1 carbine, 2 gas masks, 150 rounds of small arms ammunition and assorted clothing, foodstuffs and documents. In addition, a number of fortified bunkers, foxholes, and trenches were found and destroyed. Later in the week, the infantrymen hurt Charlie in a bit of a different way - they smashed his liquor still. The set-up included a 100-gallon still, 200 gallons of bubbling mash and 80 bottles of the hard liquor. One track commander swore he saw tears in the eyes of his men as he smashed the bottles."*

*From J. Y*

*Aug 14, 04*

*I vaguely recall that they were on a trailer-rig pulled by a 3/4 T truck. I could be wrong, but they were definitely not on an APC. They were from an Air Defense Artillery unit. I first saw them at the resupply helipad at the initial lager position on or about the 2nd or 3rd day of Gadsden.*

*In my second tour, we had the old quad 40MM s (pom-pom) attached mounted on APC chassis; they were gas and we always had a hard time keeping them, and an attached AVLB on an M-60 chassis, gassed up.*

*By the way, 2nd tour, during an on-the-spot weapons inventory check one of my recon tracks had a 20mm mounted instead of the 50.*

*Big surprise... no one remembered how the damn thing wound up on that track.*

*Jim Y.*

*Nov 15, 05*

*That was SSG. Roberts, Kenneth D and it was in Feb. 67. He did not have long to retire. I think that he was the 3rd Plt SSgt. I remember the day well it was one hell of a fight lasted all day did not get in to that base camp until next day.*

*Fred AKA rto16a*

*Nov 15, 05*

*Fred, I think the name is right but I think he was SFC , I know he was one of the Boat guys & was about due to rotate. I thought he was 1st plt. SFC Ed Cole was 3rd plt & I don't remember who was 2nd plt from the original boat bunch. I do remember before they rotated some Gen., I think Westy himself came out to the field & presented medals. Ed got a well deserved Silver Star, he was a very professional Sgt. A soldiers Sgt. I guess you'd say.*

*I think it was Op Gadsden & they just goofed on the newsreel. The way those Ops ran together & sometimes overlapped it was hard to keep up with. I remember Op. Paul Bunyan but I haven't seen anything on it.*

*Fred B.*

Feb 16, 06

Once during Gadsden when at our laager on the border NE of Tay Ninh (Guesstimate grids 598135) - a chopper came in and a pilot was shouting he needed help because one of his choppers resupplying us just went down. I yelled at the S3 MAJ Crim who sent someone out to secure the site.

At the same location during helicopter resupply, the 25th DIVARTY commander in a LOH swooped in to land as a Huey was making his approach, causing the Huey to rear up to avoid the LOH and hit tail first then went to pieces. The crew suffered only minor injuries and several of us at the helipad had to go change underwear. The DIVARTY CO turned and looked at me as said "I didn't cause that, did I?" He walked away before any of us could respond.

Jim Y

May 4, 06

Roy, -- I went in 1966 as the 4/23rd S-3 LNO then Four-Deuce Platoon Leader, during the Gadsden operation I was an OJT S-3 Air. SO I would plan my own Arty H&I (Harassment-Interdiction) and air strike support. Call-sign was Mohawk 3 Alpha. On Richard Godbout - I think I recall talking to him about the Godbout I was in OCS with.

Hennies and I were in the same OCS class at Benning's School For Boys (1963) and later (1973) at the University of Omaha on the Army's "Bootstrap" college program. That degree plus my 2nd tour company commander combat time kept me from being rifted.

Jim Y

\* \* \* \* \*

**OPERATION JUNCTION CITY** (22 February - 16 May 1967) in War Zone C was the largest single operation in the war up to then, and the second planned to run under FF II command. War Zone C was a major Viet Cong stronghold and had been a sanctuary for insurgents for over 20 yrs. It was also believed to be the location of HQs COSVN [Central Office for South Vietnam, or Communist forces headquarters.] Eventually JUNCTION CITY included almost all III Corps' military resources. The "Tomahawks" helped kick it off when they set up a base camp approx 15 km northwest of Nui Ba Den on the operation's first day. The **4 Bn 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry (Mechanized)** was cited for its courage and valor and was instrumental in the end result of JUNCTION CITY. The 84 days netted 314 small arms, 30 crew-served weapons, 1,193 artillery shells, 156 mortar rounds, 60 anti-tank rounds, 331 mines, 559 grenades, 41,482 rounds of small arms ammo, 120 bicycles, and large amounts of clothing & food.. 1,757 Allied air sorties were flown in 741 missions, with 1,648 tons of bombs and 1,104 tons of napalm dropped. Fifteen B-52 strikes were also flown. A total of 947 VC were killed, 18 POW's captured, 61 detainees held, and 183 Hoi Chanh rallied to the GVN.

Info From US Army History : Like the Iron Triangle, War Zone C was a major VC stronghold and had been a sanctuary for over 20 years. It was also believed to be the location of HQs of COSVN, but owing to remoteness . . . and the strict secrecy

with which the enemy treated their HQs, few facts were known about COSVN and units in the area. Clandestine operations conducted in Sep 66 and during operation ATTLEBORO in Nov had developed significant intel on War Zone C. By the time Army units left Iron Triangle, MACV had already received reports that VC and NVA regiments were returning to War Zone C to prepare a spring offensive. This time Gen. Westmoreland hoped to prevent Communist forces from escaping into Cambodia, as they had in ATTLEBORO.

Intel on War Zone C was continuously being re-examined, and in mid-Jan 67 the movement and relocation of the 9th VC Division and enemy regiments were established. The 271st Regt was located on the Cambodian border near Lo Go, the 272d Regt had moved to Michelin rubber plantation northeast of Dau Tieng, and the 273d was now located outside War Zone C near Tan Uyen, about 25 km northeast of Saigon. The 271st and 272nd were added as targets for GADSDEN and TUCSON [a 1<sup>st</sup> US Infantry Division operation.]

Headquarters of the 9th VC Division remained in the eastern sector of War Zone C while intel indicated the 101st NVA Regt, now listed as under 9th Div, had moved north to vicinity of An Loc and Loc Ninh. This new information resulted in a shift in the area of primary Interest from the east to the west-central section of War Zone C, and the target of major interest became COSVN HQs.

The AO for JUNCTION CITY, War Zone C, is generally the 80x50-km area bounded on the west and north by Cambodia, on the east by Highway 13, and on the south by an east-west line drawn through Ben Cat and Tay Ninh, extending to the Cambodian border. The terrain in the north and east rises to approx 150 m. while the south and west portions range in elevation from five to 50 meters. The generally flat, marshy land in the west changes to gently rolling terrain, finally becoming irregular near the E province boundary. The predominant land feature in the area is the 987-meter high Nui Ba Den. Two major rivers drain the area: the Vam Co Dong on the west and the Saigon on the east; neither is fordable. Numerous small streams are found in the eastern part of War Zone C, the principal ones having steep banks and muddy bottoms.

From forward positions established during earlier ops, elements of US 25th and 1st Divisions, 196th Inf Bde, and 11th ACR launched JUNCTION CITY, moving rapidly to establish a cordon around the war zone and to begin a new sweep of the base area. As airmobile and mech units moved into positions the morning of 21 February 1967, elements of 173d Abn Bde [and possibly 101<sup>st</sup>] made the only parachute drop of the Vietnam War - and the first combat airborne assault since the Korean War - to establish a blocking position near the Cambodian border. Other U.S. units entered the horseshoe-shaped AO through its open (southern) end.

196th Bde's 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn, 1<sup>st</sup> Inf air assaulted and established a FSB near the Cambodian border. 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Bn 31<sup>st</sup> Inf air assaulted and established FSBs to the northwest of the 2/1st Inf. These three battalions of 196th Bde began S&D missions to the southeast. At the same time, 3rd Bde, 4th Inf Division set up FSBs to the east of



196th Brigade with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn, 22(M) Inf, 3<sup>rd</sup> Bn, 22nd Inf, and 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn, 12th Inf. These assumed blocking positions and began S&D missions. The 2nd Bde, 25th Division set up FSBs along the southeast part of the division area at Trai Be, with the 1st Bn, 27<sup>th</sup> Inf on the west, 1<sup>st</sup> Bn, 5<sup>th</sup> (M) Inf the center, and 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn, 27th Inf to the east. The 1st and 3rd Squadrons 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment held positions to the southwest, with the **4th Bn 23rd Inf (Mech)** near the 1st Infantry Division boundary.

Despite emphasis on speed and surprise, army units did not encounter many enemy at the outset. As the operation entered its second phase, however, US forces re-concentrated in eastern War Zone C near Route 13. Here several battles erupted, as Communist forces tried to isolate and defeat individual units and possibly also to screen the retreat of their comrades into Cambodia.

On 23 February, 2nd Bde, US 25<sup>th</sup> Inf Div, and 11th ACR began attacked to the north while 196th Bde and 3rd Bde, 4th Inf Division held at blocking positions and continued S&D ops in that area. The next day 1st and 5th GVN Marine Bns were airlifted from Trai Be to an area already secured by 196th Lt Inf Bde and began attacking east.

On 26 February, 11th ACR moved north in support of the GVN Marines. There was little contact until B/2/12th Inf engaged an est VC company. The fire fight resulted in 11 VC KIA (BC) and 19 WIA. The S&D operation continued and VC contact was again made on 28 Feb when C/4/31st Inf took SA and AW fire from an unknown size force. Infantry, supported by arty and air strikes, killed 9 VC, while 11th ACR engaged and killed 5 VC nearby.

On 1 March, Co C, 2/34th Armor was on a road-securing operation when they were attacked by an est VC Bn. Heavy fire from tanks, along with air strikes, artillery fire, and helicopter gunships, drove off the VC. The VC lost 13 KIA, but there were no US soldiers killed. Blood trails and bandages found in the battle area indicated that there were many more VC casualties.

On 5 and 6 March, 196th Brigade, and 2nd Bde, US 4th Division were re-positioned within their AO. New base camps were set up, from which patrols and S&Ds were launched. That same day, the 1<sup>st</sup>/5th Inf (M) received 120 rounds 60mm mortar fire from unknown VC forces. The 1/5<sup>th</sup> Bobcats returned fire and made a sweep of the suspected mortar positions. VC losses were unknown. There were five US WIA.

The next day, 11th ACR and 3rd Bde, 4th Division took up new blocking positions along the Cambodian border. A task force comprising GVN Marines and the 1<sup>st</sup>/5th (M) Inf began S&D ops in that area.

On 8 March the task force located and destroyed a VC base camp containing over 150 bunkers. During the assault on the camp, a helicopter from Troop D/1/11th ACR was hit by an RPG-2 round resulting in major damage and five US WIA. At the same location Troop A engaged an unknown size VC force, resulting in one VC KIA and the capture of a POW.

On 11 March, the GVN marines ended their part in JUNCTION CITY. The 3rd Bde, 4<sup>th</sup> Division and 11th ACR continued S&D ops. Troop B/1/11th ACR made contact with a VC Co along the river bordering Cambodia. The VC tried to flee across the river but helicopter gunships and air strikes blocked them. As the battle progressed Troops A and C were helilifted in to assist troop B. Contact continued all night, and flare ships provided continuous illumination. The fighting died down at dawn, and the battle area swept. There were 28 VC bodies found, and blood trails indicated there were many more casualties. 28 carbines, one heavy machine gun, two anti-tank weapons, two printing presses, and one electrical generator were captured.

On 19 March, near Ap Bau Bang [the scene of repeated 1<sup>st</sup> Inf Division heavy contact near Rte 13], Co A/2/22d Inf (M) received heavy SA and AW fire from a VC force. Fire was returned with SA, AW, and M-79 grenade launchers. The short but fierce battle resulted in five US KIA and 8 WIA. VC losses were unknown, but blood trails indicated they had many casualties. Same day, 3/22nd Inf was helilifted into an LZ. As the Bn set down, they received fire from five command detonated mines. Three helos were destroyed and six more were damaged. The supporting aviation units suffered 10 KIA and 16 WIA. The battalion completed the landing, and after a fierce fire fight with an unknown size VC force, secured the LZ despite almost being overrun. During the battle, a large VC claymore was detonated against Co C, 3/22 Inf resulting in 5 US WIA. The 2/12th Inf then landed in the LZ and the two Bns set up a forward base.

On 6 April 67, 196th Bde moved to Trai Bi, northwest of Tay Ninh City near Cambodia. Troop F, 17th Cav, on an S & D op, received 25 rds 60mm mortar fire. They returned the fire with small arms, automatic weapons, and M79 grenade launchers. Artillery and helo gunships were also called in on the estimated VC Co. In the ensuing battle, 8 VC were KIA. From 8 April to 16 May, JUNCTION CITY was gradually phased out, with no further significant enemy contact reported. Hereafter, that operation became a shadow of the multi-division effort it had been at its outset. Most Army units were withdrawn, either to return to their bases or to participate in other ops. The 196th Inf Brigade was transferred to I Corps as part of Task Force Oregon, to replace US Marine forces sent north to meet a growing enemy threat near the DMZ. Contacts with enemy forces in this final phase were meager. Again a planned VC offensive had been aborted; the enemy himself escaped, though not unscathed.

In the wake of JUNCTION CITY, MACV's attention reverted to the still critical security conditions around Saigon. The US 1st Infantry Division returned to War Zone D northeast of Saigon to search for the 271st VC Regiment and to disrupt the insurgents' LOC between War Zones C and D. Despite two major contacts, the main body of the VC Regt eluded its US pursuers. US units again returned to Iron Triangle between April and July 67 after enemy forces were detected in the old stronghold. Supplies and documents were found in quantities even larger than those found in CEDAR FALLS. Once again, also, encounters with the communists were fleeting. The enemy's reappearance in Iron Triangle and War Zone D, combined with

rocket & mortar attacks on U.S. bases around Saigon heightened Gen. Westmoreland's concern about the security of the capital. When 1st Inf Div's base at Phuoc Vinh and Bien Hoa Air Base were attacked in mid-1967, that division mounted ops into the Ong Dong jungle and the Vinh Loi woods. Other operations swept the jungles and villages of Bien Hoa Province, and the 25<sup>th</sup> Division sought once again to support pacification in Hau Nghia Province.

These actions pointed up perhaps THE basic US problem: large, multi-division operations into the enemy's zones produced benefits by reducing and keeping enemy main force regiments at bay. It impeded their access to heavily populated areas and prevented them from reinforcing NLF provincial and district forces. Yet, when US units were shifted toward the border in order to engage them, it took pressure off the VC in the interior around the population centers. Gen. Westmoreland faced a strategic dilemma: he could not afford to keep substantial forces away from their bases for more than a few months without jeopardizing local security. Despite the sharply increased US combat power now in-country, unless he received MORE forces, he must keep switching back and forth between the two imperatives. Through '67 into '68, MACV's likelihood of getting more troops beyond those already scheduled to deploy during the latter half of the year, and in early '68, was first remote, and later in '68 as political pressure mounted, the Administration turned down this request for an additional 200,000 men. Instead, he got a token 20 thousand.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Apr 16, 05*

*Neil, -- I really wish I could remember more about that time. [Op Junction City – ed.] Sleep deprivation during those days severely dulled my memory.*

*Since we were attached to the 11th Armored Cav for the operation, and tasked by them to "high-diddle-diddle-up-the-middle", planning by me was trying to get a handle on our artillery, and the 11<sup>th</sup> ACR air support. LTC Williams wrote most of the OPORD tasking our units with intermediate objectives.*

*I mentioned once before, that on D-Day morning, I received a message from the S-1 to get on a chopper and head to base for DROS. The chopper brought the newly assigned S-3 to whom I handed my M-16, map case, and pointed to the S-3 577 track revving up to move out. Wish I had kept my maps.*

*Ah the woulda-coulda-shouldas still haunt me. LOL,  
Jim Y*

\* \* \* \* \*

**BATTLE OF SOUI TRE** (21 March 1967), also known as FSB GOLD, and part of operation JUNCTION CITY, merits separate attention as indicating the increasing intensity of the conflict in III CTZ. [Mentioned to show increased intensity of combat.]

It began at 0430 on 21 March. A night patrol from B/3/22nd Inf just outside 2/77th Arty's camp approx 15 miles northwest of Dau Tieng, reported movement around an ambush position. At 0630 the patrol prepared to return. A minute later FSB Gold came under heavy 60mm and 82mm mortar fire and the 3rd Plt ambush

was attacked by a large VC force. Within 5 minutes the patrol was overrun and all its members KIA or WIA. At 0635 a Recon patrol from 3/22d Inf engaged a large VC force that approached to 35 meters from the camp's southeast perimeter. Soon, the whole base came under attack from VC recoilless rifles, RPG-2s, AW, and SA. Heaviest attacks fell on the northeast and southeast perimeters. As the attack increased, three batteries 2/77th Arty began counter-mortar fire to neutralize the heavy VC mortar concentrations which continued to pound the US camp.

During the final assault, Co B reported the southeast perimeter at 1st Plt had been penetrated and a reaction force was needed to reinforce it. US 2/77th Arty rushed men to the perimeter. At 0700 the first FAC arrived overhead in an O1-E and began directing TAC AIR strikes. At the same time, support fire from two batteries of 105mm located at FSBs nearby was brought within 100 m. of the perimeter.

At 0711, Co B reported that its 1st Plt was surrounded and overrun by a human wave attack. Air strikes were called into the eastern woodland to relieve pressure on B Co's perimeter, but the FAC [Air Force Forward Air Controller] was shot down by automatic weapons fire. At 0752, the Co B C/O requested that 2/77th Arty fire "beehive rounds" [direct fire anti-personnel 'flechette' artillery rounds] into the southeast and south perimeter. At 0756, B Co reported complete VC penetration in its 1st platoon sector and they were desperate for ammo. Ammo and a 20 man reaction force from Co A were sent to Co B. At 0813, the northeast section was overrun with another human wave attack. At 0815, an Alpha Co night ambush just outside the perimeter charged back inside, somehow managing to elude the VC. At 0818, Co A's commander reported the VC penetrated the northern perimeter.

The 2/22<sup>nd</sup> Infantry (Mech) was a few miles to the west, but was cut off by an unmapped, unfordable stream and couldn't reinforce.

Ten minutes later a quad .50 machine gun located in the northern US sector was hit by RPG-2 rounds and its crew killed. VC swarmed over the weapon and tried to turn it on GI positions, but were struck by a 105 gun crew who saw the whole action from their position 75 meters away.

By 0840, the northeast, east, and southeast perimeters had withdrawn to secondary defensive positions around the artillery batteries. The north, west, and south sectors had managed to hold firm despite intense pressure from large numbers of VC who advanced within 15-20 meters. The guerillas were within hand grenade range of the Bn CP, and were only five meters from the aid station. The remaining 2/77th guns began firing beehive rounds into attacking VC. Air strikes were brought to within 50 meters of US positions and supporting 105mm and 155mm batteries threw up a continuous wall of high explosive fire around the perimeter. When the 2/77th Artillery exhausted its supply of beehives, they fired HE rounds point blank. By 0830 the situation had worsened. The N, W, and S sectors were still under intense VC pressure. The northeast, east, and southeast perimeters had been pulled in even closer, and were still under VC human wave attacks.

At 0900, a relief column from 2 Bn 12th Infantry were able to counterattack and re-establish the original perimeter. The VC continued attacks, many of them advancing wearing bandages from earlier wounds. Some, so badly wounded that they couldn't walk, were carried piggyback by their comrades. At 0912, a mechanized

infantry and armor column from the 2/22nd Inf and 2/34th Armor broke through the jungle from the SW. With the tanks' 90mm guns firing canister rounds and all machine guns blazing, they swept into the advancing VC. Soon, the guerillas began to withdraw and by 1045, the Battle of Soui Tre was over.

The 272nd VC Regiment had been decimated, leaving behind 647 bodies. Documents found showed that careful planning had been made by VC before the attack. The elite 272nd, one of the best organized and equipped guerilla units, was finished as an effective fighting force. It had been long known for its fighting ability and was one of the few VC units that would engage in daylight. Its troops scattered in a disorganized rout as arty and air strikes pounded at their heels. Nine VC were captured, and over 150 weapons of all types captured. Huge piles of enemy equipment, clothing, and documents were collected and evacuated. During the battle 2,200 rounds of US artillery and 57 air strikes supported the action. US casualties were 31 KIA and 109 wounded.

**OPERATION MAKALAPA** (18 March - 21 April 1967) was a multi-brigade, two-phase S&D operation in the Duc Hoa area [est 10 miles south and slightly west of Cu Chi] to destroy local VC forces, and eliminate the area as a safe haven by destroying enemy bunkers, tunnels, and huts. During the first part, 1st Brigade, 25th Infantry Division along with the 1/50th ARVN Regiment and the 25th ARVN Division (-) established blocking positions east of the Vam Co Dong River and sent in airmobile assaults from their staging areas. In the second phase, the 1st and 2nd Brigades, 25th Inf Division air assaulted in the Luong Hoa area, ran S&Ds, and blocked VC exfiltration to the north and east. The ARVN Task Force continued to hold their blocking positions on the east bank of the Vam Co Dong River in addition to running ambushes and combat sweeps.

On 18 March, Co C 4 Bn 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry moved by motor convoy from Cu Chi to near Vinh Loc and began setting up a base camp as previously coordinated with the District Chief. Throughout the operation, the spirit of cooperation between US forces and local population remained high. The next day 4/9<sup>th</sup>'s Bn HQs moved to Co C's location. Also on 19 March, Co A, 4/9<sup>th</sup> Inf moved by helilift to establish a base camp near the village of Ap Tay. Late evening, 19 March, an Alpha Co ambush engaged a VC squad, and in a brief fire fight killed one guerilla, wounded three others, and captured one Chicom carbine. On 20 March Co B, 4/9<sup>th</sup> Inf completed their deployment in this AO by helo to a Co base camp N of Vinh Loc. On 24 March, Co C, 4/9<sup>th</sup> Inf made an assault into the notorious "Pineapple Patch" area along the Kinh Xang Canal. They made no contact as they swept both sides of the canal, but one man set off a booby trap resulting in one US WIA. The sweep destroyed two bunkers and captured two ANPRC-10 radios, one Halicraft radio, and two Chicom carbines. Assorted ammo, documents, clothes, and food were also captured. A cordon and search of Ap Tay village began on 26 March 67, following an intel lead from a VC prisoner who told his captors that various guerilla agents hid in the village during the day. As the cordon formed, two men, presumed VC, ran from the village and escaped. The remaining males were interrogated and six were discovered to be VC. Patrols and local security ops supplemented by MEDCAPs and other Civic

Action programs continued during the rest of March. Company B, 4/9<sup>th</sup> Infantry and **Company A, 4/23rd Infantry (M)** ran fast moving search and destroy operations in that area.

During this period an APC from **4<sup>th</sup> Bn 23d Inf (M)** was badly damaged by an anti-tank mine, but there were no US casualties.

On 27 March, Co B 4/9<sup>th</sup> Inf received 6-8 rounds of mortar and recoilless rifle fire resulting in **one US KIA, Charles L. Keller of A Company** in support, and 12 US WIA. The fire came from a VC force just across the Kinh Xang Canal. The enemy was engaged by artillery, air strikes, and helo gunships, killing 12 VC.

On 3 April, an APC from **C Co, 4<sup>th</sup> Bn, /23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry (M)** was damaged by a mine with no US casualties.

On 8 April, operation MAKALAPA Phase II began. Elements of 2nd Bde set up a CP at Duc Hoa. Shortly after, units from the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Bns, 27th Infantry lifted into position southwest of the junction of Cau An Ha and Kinh Xang canals and swept southwest along the Zinh Xang Canal until 11 April. Enemy contact was limited to sporadic sniper fire but thousands of bunkers were destroyed. Demolition teams worked day and night destroying enemy fortifications, and used so much explosive special supplies had to be helilifted in.

**On 10 April, James W. Hintz, of B/4/23<sup>rd</sup> (M) was KIA.**

Beginning 12 April, 1st Bn, 27th Inf contacted an est VC Platoon just north of Rach Gau and engaged them with automatic weapons, small arms, and artillery. 22 VC were KIA and four POWs taken. Later that day, Co A, 2/14<sup>th</sup> Inf found a cache of 74 weapons, including an 81mm mortar, two 60mm mortars, two 75mm RRs, two 57mm RRs, and three light MGs in 55-gal drums and metal boxes hidden in dense brush along a canal.

**On 15, April 1967 B Co , 4/23<sup>rd</sup> (M) lost three men KIA: Antonio Flores Jr, Robert A. McCartney, and Steven J. Surma.**

On 18 April, 1st Brigade's role in MAKALAPA ended & it returned to Cu Chi Base. 2nd Brigade continued assaults by 1/27th Infantry into the area until 21 Apr, at which time the operation ended.

Although the total number of VC killed was relatively small, MAKALAPA was one of the most successful Division operations. It destroyed very many bunkers and fighting positions, which, coupled with the monsoon's onset in April, made rebuilding them in the near term practically impossible. It thus blocked long-established guerilla routes into the Saigon/Tan Son Nhut area and disrupted VC plans for attacks on these objectives. In addition, the destruction and/or capture of enemy supplies, weapons, and ammo sharply reduced the guerilla's effectiveness in the area.

From Official Reports: Results of Operation MAKALAPA were 58 VC KIA (BC), 157 VC KIA (poss), six prisoners, 144 detainees, of which three were classified Civil Defendants, and three HOI CHANH. Destroyed were 3,324 bunkers, 265 structures, 71 tunnels, 133 sampans, 223 booby traps, 121 large caliber rds, 3.7 tons of rice, 511 protective masks. Captured: 88 SA and 14 crew served weapons (CSW,) three AN/ PRC-10 radios, 151 lbs of documents, 151 VC claymores, 10,854 rds SA ammo, 1,521 grenades, 30 lbs of clothing, 5.5 tons rice, and 380 lbs fish. ARVN Forces participating in MAKALAPA consisted initially of PF [Popular Force, something like the SVN National Guard] Platoons operating with US companies on S & D Ops. When the op was expanded to two Brigades, ARVN Forces were increased to include 51st Ranger Bn, 1/50 Infantry 3/10 Cavalry and 25th Recon Co. ARVN 34<sup>th</sup> Ranger Battalion continued S & D Ops with U.S. 25<sup>th</sup> Inf Division's 2nd Brigade. Other ARVN units screened flanks and provided blocking forces.

\* \* \* \* \*

Jan 9, 05

*We were Mechanized less than 60 days when a Gunner [U.S.] shot me, 28 Mar 67. We didn't have the advantage of 'experience' to protect us. I guess you all improvised along the way. Being 'legs' was a dog. Then, a new, more powerful danger 'morphed'. My track hit two mines in that time,(both are good stories). But the VC then started putting booby traps up in the trees. Five minutes after being relieved from point track, the new track tripped one, and our commo man got hit in the back of his upper left arm. Can't remember his name but have a photo of him. He didn't return to the unit. Seems the VC were quick to adjust to tracks. It also appears that the longer the war went on, the worse it got. The war wasn't over when I left!!! Glad you got to see ice and beer. We didn't have ponchos during the monsoon but we never went thirsty then. Definitely respect the dangers and casualties the unit sustained. To me, it sounds like the war was much worse after my time. Thank God !!! Have Fun,  
Spook [Carl Roy, C Co]*

\* \* \* \* \*

## **NEW CAMPAIGN: COUNTEROFFENSIVE PHASE III 1 JUNE 1967 – 29 JAN 1968**

**OPERATION SABER THRUST** (7 April - undetermined) involved S & D and patrolling operations vicinity of the CU CHI base camp and along Main Supply Routes (MSRs) involving elements of 3/4<sup>th</sup> Cav, 2/22<sup>rd</sup> Inf, 1/5<sup>th</sup> Inf (M), and **4<sup>th</sup> Bn, 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry (Mech)**. Phase II involved a Cav Squadron-controlled sweep vic LOC THANH (XT438166) on 9 and 10 Apr. The Squadron Task Force included Trp B and Trp D of the ¾ Cav, **Co C, 4<sup>th</sup> Bn, 23<sup>rd</sup> Inf (Mech)** detached from 1st Brigade) and Btry A, 2nd Bn, 13th Arty. With the PF Co from TRANG BANG in a blocking position, the Sqdn detained 42 Vietnamese moving NW. On 20 Apr 67, **Co B, 4<sup>th</sup> Bn, 23<sup>rd</sup> Inf (Mech)** was OPCODE to Phase V, as part of a Task Force sweeping toward AP BAU DUNG (XT370370). Units included Trp [Troop] A and D/3/4 Cav, and Btry A/7/11 Arty. Three airstrikes were also employed. Two gunships of Trp D

accounted for 2 VC KIA (BC), and the Aero-Rifle Plt, Trp D also killed 2 VC (BC). Trp A killed 11 VC (BC) and suffered two US WIA. **B Co, 4th Bn, 23rd Infantry (Mech)** killed two VC (poss) and captured extensive medical supplies. A sweep of the area next day by ARVNs reported finding 32 VC (BC) resulting from the op. A document found identified the VC unit as the 401 Co, D-14 Battalion.

**20 April saw the 4th Battalion, 23rd Inf (M) lose four men KIA: George T. Bean of Charlie Company, and William R. Lundberg, Ernest M. Skinner, and Rodis J Warren, all of Bravo Company.**

From Official Records: Results of SABER THRUST to date were: 51 VC KIA (BC), ten VC KIA (poss), four VC PWs, 66 detainees. Captured were: One AK-47 rifle, one CHICOM Carbine, ten0 lbs Medical Supplies. Destroyed were: 15 tunnels, 36 bunkers, 30 punji pits, 11,450 lbs rice, one blacksmith's forge, two 15mm (?) rounds, two co-size base camps, one squad size camp, five structures, three trench lines, one mess area.

**OPERATION MANHATTAN** (23 April - 7 June 67) saw 1st & 2nd Brigades 25th Infantry Division, take part in an all-IIFV op in this search and destroy operation against VC forces near Boi Loi-Ben Cui. The secondary mission was to destroy VC facilities and Fortifications in Boi Loi Woods. Intel indicated that the AO contained many important enemy base camps used for logistics and command. There were signs of one complete VC Bn and part of another Bn in the area. Boi Loi Woods were characterized by heavy secondary forest and dense undergrowth, some wetland rice paddies and a large area of non-producing rubber plantation. MANHATTAN began on 23 April when the **4/23rd Inf (Mech)** moved to secure landing zones for the 4/9th Inf and 2/14th Inf.

On 29 April, **Bravo Co, 4th Bn, 23rd Inf (Mech)** was hit by a large VC force with SA, mortars and rifle grenades. The Tomahawks returned fire with SA, AW and arty. As the battle continued, the VC fired on the unit with RPG-2 rockets, & one APC was hit. Close support airstrikes were called in and after 2 hours of intense fighting, the VC broke contact and withdrew, taking casualties with them. **On this day, Paul L. Cyr of Bravo Company was KIA.**

During the next few days, Tomahawks provided security for engineers clearing jungle. Starting on 11 May, the focus was on 5th Engineers (LCT). Thirty Rome Plows hacked away at dense undergrowth and trees in the heart of Boi Loi Woods. The **4 Bn (Mech) 23rd Infantry's** mission now shifted to providing security for the LCT [land clearing team], plus S&Ds and ambushes. The 65th Engineers secondary role was upgrading and improving roads throughout the Area of Operations.

Between 16 May and 6 Jun, **4th Bn 23rd Inf (M)** elements continued providing security and undertook further local search and destroy missions. On 22 May the battalion began a 5-day operation in which they inserted and extracted PF Recon units, while running combined S&Ds and night ambushes with Popular Forces.



**On 25 May, Robert G. Staton of Charlie Company was KIA.**

On 28 May the Tomahawks ended this special operation and relocated to 65th Engineers and the previous Land Clearing Team security operations..

June 7 saw the **4<sup>th</sup> Bn, 23<sup>rd</sup> Inf (Mech)** return to Cu Chi base & at 2400 hrs, and Operation MANHATTAN was concluded.

During these 45 days, 36 MEDCAPs were conducted, treating 5,433 patients. In addition, 20 short-term, high-impact civic action projects were done. Schools were repaired and refurbished; refugees received clothes, cooking utensils, and food; RVN PF outposts built; and large quantities of food distributed to RF/PF families. At the request of ARVN authorities, 82 refugee families were relocated to Dau Tieng and given clothing, shelter, cooking/eating utensils, and commodity support. Civic action, though initially undertaken to gain acceptance of US presence, supported the Revolutionary Development Program. A total of 20 miles of road were upgraded, giving residents access to population centers and markets. Large areas of jungle were cleared providing local inhabitants with 4,200 acres of additional farm land. In Psyops, 3,545,500 copies of 43 different types of leaflets were dropped. Loudspeaker Chieu Hoi broadcasts totaled 1,725 minutes.

Info From Official Records: The 25th Inf Division began MANHATTAN on 23 April with the goal of destroying VC forces and installations in the HO BO - BOI LOI - BEN CUI areas, and along the SAIGON River. other II FFV units. After II FFV ended the Op on 11 May, 25th Infantry Division continued MANHATTAN as a division operation until 7 June 19 67, using 1st and 2nd Brigades, 25th Inf Division and 3rd Bde, 4th Inf Div.

23 April, after landing and securing the areas, the units began local S & Ds. That same day, 1/5th (Mech) Infantry secured a Landing Zone for the 1/27<sup>th</sup> Infantry while the 34th ARVN ranger Battalion established a blocking position along Saigon River. 3rd Brigade, US 4th Inf Division conducted S & D operations southeast of Dau Tieng.

24 April, 1st Brigade 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division ran S & D ops in their sector. During the afternoon Co B, 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn, 14<sup>th</sup> Infantry received SA and AW fire from an unknown number of VC. Fire was returned with SA, M-79s, and arty. The fierce firefight resulted in one VC killed, no US casualties. Later in the evening Co B, 2/14<sup>th</sup> Infantry came under mortar attack from an est enemy plt. They countered with SA, AW and artillery. The fight lasted about 10 minutes; and one US soldier was wounded. US counterfire blasted enemy positions, but VC losses could not be determined. Late that same evening, an ambush patrol from Co A, 4/9<sup>th</sup> Infantry engaged an unknown number VC. In a short but heavy firefight. Two VC were killed; there were no US casualties.

On the afternoon of 26 April, Co B, 1<sup>st</sup>/5th (Mech) Infantry engaged and killed a VC sniper who had had been harassing their position. Co C 2/27<sup>th</sup> Infantry ran two air

assaults. Their first LZ zone was “cold”, but the second time they sat down they came under SA fire from an unknown number of VC. They returned fire with SA and AW killing two VC. All day, US units encountered many booby traps and mines. Though they moved cautiously, one soldier was killed and 12 wounded by booby traps.

Between 27-30 April, all Brigades continued S & D operations in their sectors. On 27 April, Co A, 2/14<sup>th</sup> Infantry found a large weapons cache of 105 rifles and pistols, 12 MGs, and over 100,000 rds of ammo. This cache was located in a complex with many bunkers and tunnels which was believed to be a base camp and supply point for a NLF unit that had been reported operating in that area.

On 28 April 67, C/2/14 Infantry received SA, AW and 82mm mortar fire from an unknown size VC force. Fire was returned with SA, AW and arty, resulting in one VC killed. There were no US casualties. Early next morning **Co B, 4 Bn 23rd Infantry (Mech)** was hit by a large VC force employing small arms, mortars, and rifle grenades. The Tomahawks returned fire with SA, AW, and artillery. As the battle continued, VC fired anti-tank RPG-2s. One APC was hit. Close air strikes were called in. After two hours of intense fighting, the VC broke contact and withdrew, taking their killed and wounded with them. One US soldier was KIA and 5 WIA. The only equipment damaged was an APC, which was destroyed. Scattered enemy contact by 1st & 2<sup>nd</sup>/27th Infantry and 2/12th Infantry resulted in four VC KIA and one POW. **[The KIA was perhaps Paul Cyr, but records show he was KIA on 29 April.** This seems to be a common source of confusion. – ed]

During the next five days, all units continued their sweeps, except **4<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry (Mech)** who provided security for the Engineer's jungle clearing operation. On 1 May, Co A, 1st Bn, 27<sup>th</sup> Infantry engaged an est VC platoon with SA and AW, resulting in 2 VC killed and no US casualties. The same day Co A, 2/14<sup>th</sup> Inf found 35 tons rice &, evac'd it for distribution to refugees. Troops A & D, ¾ Cavalry were sweeping the southern edge of the AO to engage any VC who might flee that way. They made three contacts the 1st week of May, resulting in 2 VC KIA and five POWs. Throughout Boi Loi Woods, especially in the southern sector, many booby traps and mines were encountered, resulting in numerous US casualties.

Between 6-10 May, all units continued S&D ops in their sectors. The 2/27th Infantry (Wolfhounds) ran several assaults along the Saigon River.

On 9 May, 2nd Brigade, 25th Infantry Division finished MANHATTAN and returned to CU CHI Base to prepare for the forthcoming **Operation KOLEKOLE.**

On 10 May, 3rd Brigade, 4th Infantry Division finished with MANHATTAN and returned to DAU TIENG Base to prepare for forthcoming AHINA and DIAMOND HEAD Operations. 1st Brigade, 25th Infantry Division continued operations and provided security for extensive clearing operations by 65th Engineer Battalion using ROME PLOWs, a modified bulldozer with a sharpened blade, for clearing densely vegetated areas. In addition, necessary roads were built in the AO. Clearing land

deprived VC of sanctuary they had long enjoyed throughout the area, especially in the HO BO and BOI LOI Woods.

Starting on 11 May 67, the main focus changed to 65th Engr Bn's jungle clearing operation. Thirty "Rome Plows" hacked at dense undergrowth and trees in the heart of the Boi Loi Woods. The emphasis of MANHATTAN now shifted to providing local security for the engineers through local S&Ds and ambushes. Engineers also tackled improving and upgrading roads throughout the operational area. This purposes were: 1) increase mobility and cut reaction time of US forces, and 2) long term benefit to the local Vietnamese, who use roads to travel throughout area, and transporting products to market.

Between 16 May and 6 June, **4<sup>th</sup> Bn, 23<sup>rd</sup> Inf (M)** continued to provide engineer security and run local S&Ds. On 22 May, they began a five day operation in which they inserted and extracted PF [Popular Force] Recon units, and also ran combined S&Ds and night ambushes. On 28 May **4<sup>th</sup> Bn, 23<sup>rd</sup> Inf (Mech)** relocated with the engineers to continue security for base camp, and at 2400 hrs, MANHATTAN ended.

Results of OP MANHATTAN were: 74 VC KIA (BC), 99 VC KIA (poss), three HOI CHANH and 19 PW. Enemy weapons/munitions losses were: 201 small arms, 18 Crew Served Weapons, 42 artillery rounds, 671 mortar rounds, 214 AT weapon rounds, 293 mines, 901 grenades and booby traps, 400,543 rds of small arms ammo, 168 indiv cluster bomb units, 3200 blasting caps, 2300 feet Of detonating cord, 1800 lbs TNT and 2278 lbs black powder. Enemy equipment losses: 34 sampans, 400 lbs of clothing, 443 lbs medical supplies, 250 tons of rice, 5.5 tons other foodstuffs, 398 lbs of documents, 12,760 feet commo wire, seven radios, 30 lbs punji stakes, 17 lbs tools, one telephone, seven protective masks, two plows, 108 bicycles, one oxcart, six generators, 25 gals CS agent and six outboard motors. Additional enemy losses: 461 structures, 1594 m. tunnels, 1163 bunkers, 421 foxholes, 5634 m. trench, seven camps, one radio repair shop, one bicycle shop and two hospitals.

\* \* \* \* \*

*From LTC Avery Fullerton exit interview dated 21 May, 1968: ". . . in II Corps there is one Rome Plow team. It consists of 30 bulldozers equipped with special equipment which makes them into a Rome Plow and the personnel to maintain and operate these dozers. This team has been used extensively by the 25<sup>th</sup> Division for clearing operations in the Iron Triangle, Filhol Plantation, Ho Bo Woods, and to some extent the roads in War Zone C.*

*Security for Rome Plowing consists of sweeping out an area or attacking into an area so the plows can go in with relative safety and then while the plowing is actually going on, escorting them, out posting their plowing zones and so forth. In the Iron Triangle, not only was **4<sup>th</sup> Bn, 23<sup>rd</sup> Inf (Mech)** involved in Rome Plow security, but also the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Wolfhounds [27<sup>th</sup> Inf] were put in and were operating ahead of the Rome Plow clearing to sweep the enemy out. This additional infantry support was*

not used in either the Filhol or Ho Bo; the technique that was used was to actually run a full-scale attack into an area leaving the Rome Plows in a secure place until the area could be neutralized . . . then using escort-type security.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Tropic Lightning News of 2 Feb 68

2ND BDE - Operation Saratoga infantrymen uncovered an underground room containing more than 270 rounds of rocket ammunition and booster charges in a recent land clearing operation through the Ho Bo Woods.

The find rates as one of the largest ammunition caches located to date in the 25th Inf Div operation, which started Dec. 7.

The vault held 271 RPG-2 rocket launcher rounds, as well as 263 booster charges.

Members of the reconnaissance platoon, 4th Bn (Mech), 23rd Inf, and the 27th Land Clearing Team discovered the cache as they were bulldozing an area in the southern sector of the woods.

According to PFC Robert G. Rubin of Tucson, Ariz., who found the cache, the discovery almost turned into tragedy.

Rubin said he was about to throw a hand grenade inside what he thought was an ordinary bunker, when he peered inside and noticed the enemy rockets.

1LT Gennaro Mellis, reconnaissance platoon leader from Mount Vernon, N. Y., estimated the rockets and charges were a supply point for at least a battalion.”

“When we stopped, I thought we just had another bunker,” Mellis commented. “My tunnel rat said he had 100 RPG rounds, but I thought he was kidding. We formed a chain and started passing them out, and they just kept coming and coming.”

The enemy ammunition was later evacuated and the bunker destroyed.

\* \* \* \* \*

July 28, 2002

Do you remember the big bunker complex we [C Co] found in the Boi Loi Woods in May '67 and spent the better part of the next three days trying to take the complex? After it was over we recovered all kinds of baby food, baby clothes, women's clothes, rifles, ammo, etc. We each got a copy of a map of the complex that they let us have. Seems like the VC let us drive right in and then they closed the gate and tore the hell out of us. I think we had to get B Co to come in and help us cause we had lost so many people and APCs? We had to cut the jungle up to get the medevac in so they could take out the wounded? I was reading another story here and this one just popped into my head and thought I would run it past you.

Thanks, Bob C.

June 12, 2013

Bruce, this is Carl M. Combs. I was assigned to the 2nd Plt 3rd sqd from Apr 67 to somewhere in late Aug. The 3rd squad was ambushed on 18 Jun of 67 and we were sent to 91st Evac in Chu Chi. Do you remember a Lt Dudderstat and Archie Harris? I am the Southern boy from Georgia. Carl

Aug 12, 2015

*Does anyone from mid 67 remember an incident land clearing in Ho Bo Woods when the VC/NVA got inside the wire and raised all kind of hell.. **C Co lost 6 KIA including Lt Stanley Patterson.** Bob Chisholm from the company was there and is trying to reconstruct events. Doc Woods might know but I don't know if he monitors this site.*

*KIAs were Kubinciak, Patterson, Qualls, Taylor (Harold), Taylor (Lee), Wilson. Bob C would appreciate anything you know, and I'll add it to the detail. p. 84)  
Neil A*

*I can remember setting up a perimeter for three days and on the third night the enemy came out of the tunnels and we had an in the perimeter firefight. Seems we set up over a underground hospital. several nurses were killed that night as I remember it!*

*I don't think this is what you were referring to but you did jog my memory.  
Brock*

\* \* \* \* \*

When the Tropic Lightning Division's 27th year began, anniversary celebrations took a back seat to war. The 25th Division pressed four operations simultaneously: BARKING SANDS, KOLEKOLE, DIAMONDHEAD, & ATLANTA.

From 25th Infantry Division Lessons Learned:

ITEM: Jungle Clearing II

DISCUSSION: A new concept in land clearing has been tested near CU CHI by Co C, 65th Engr Bn consisting of dragging a large [ship's] anchor chain behind two vehicles, spaced so that the vegetation passing between them will come into contact with the chain. Each link is 9 in. wide and 12 in. long, and weighs approx 28 lbs. Type of equipment employed dictates type of clearing that can be done. The weight of the chain and its pulling force are the main variables. It is easily understood then, that vegetation which only bends under a swift blow from a heavy object is not effectively cleared this way. In undergrowth with diameters of trees and shrubs smaller than four inches, the chain passes over vegetation, after which it springs back up, uncut. Better results are got when the chain is used to clear trees with diameters greater than four inches. The chain has been used to clear rubber trees up to three feet in base diameter. The chain catches around the base of the tree, rides up on the trunk, causes the tree to lean, and eventually weighs it down; uprooting and laying it on the ground.

The chain was found to be more effective on rubber trees rather than any other type of vegetation. In the plantation, it was possible to drive the vehicle down the paths between trees, since they are planted in straight rows, side by side. Trees in Filhol Plantation where the cutting was done, are planted in rows running generally northwest to southeast. The rows are about 8 meters. apart, and the trees are approx 6 m. apart. Selecting direction in which to clear is a relatively simple matter. The most effective cuts are long and straight. The width of the cut will depend on the size of the trees. It was found that the trees in the Filhol, which averaged about

twenty inches in diameter, were most effectively cleared in cuts of two rows each. The length of the chain is a factor here also, since the strain on the vehicle varies directly with the angle at which the chain is stretched. The chain is of 90 ft. sections which can be joined or separated. Through experiment, a length of 360 ft. (4 sections) was found to be optimal, since this length of chain was sufficient to reduce strain on vehicles, and at the same time, was not so lengthy as to greatly impede maneuverability. Careful briefing of both vehicle operators and vehicle commanders is a must before beginning. It should be emphasized that staying in the clear paths is important. Also drivers should coordinate with one another during the op. The vehicles should "glide" during periods of little resistance, and then accelerate as soon as the chain catches on the trees. This prevents damage to pintles, stalling, and in general, makes for smoother operation. One vehicle should remain slightly ahead of the other, so that if one hits a mine, personnel on the other vehicle are not likely to be affected.

Reversing direction can be a tricky operation. If at all possible, cuts should be made between two open areas to facilitate turning. The turns should be very deliberate, especially when there are obstacles present. One method is to make a half circle with both vehicles. Another method is for one vehicle to make a very tight neutral steer while the other makes a somewhat broader turn. Still another method is for both vehicles to back over the chain, make a tight turn, and head in the reverse direction for another cut. Many variations are possible. Drivers should not hesitate to drive over the chain if it is necessary, and must only be careful not to get so far apart as to be pulling against each other. In most cases, the condition of soil will dictate the type of turn. This is because maneuverability of the vehicles pulling chain is hampered in boggy or damp terrain. Also, it is important to cut such that the fallen trees will not be in the path of the vehicles on future cuts. A minimum of planning is required to accomplish this since the chains pull the trees inward and stacks them in very neat rows.

Once begun, it is necessary to assert aggressive control over the entire operation, and be constantly alert. It must react quickly to obstacles and be quick in formulating a plan for reversing direction after each cut.

The controller should be on one of the two vehicles pulling the chain, and should have ready contact with all elements so that the operation will run as quickly as possible instead of bogging down due to some unforeseen situation.

The mechanical considerations are many and play an important role. The weak areas soon present themselves as a matter of course. There are some areas in which preventive maintenance can save time and enhance the operation in general. The weakest part of the installation is the pintles to which the chain is attached. It is found that the constant strain against the pintles soon wears the threads on the four bolts which hold them in place. It is not uncommon for these bolts to fail. One solution to this problem is to carry extra bolts for quick repairs. An even better solution is to reinforce them with 1" or 1-1/8" wire cable. The cable is threaded through the two hook brackets to form a complete loop through the third link from the end of the chain. This reinforcement takes a great deal of strain off the pintles and reduces pintle failure by about 90%.

**OPERATION KOLEKOLE** (13 May - 7 December ,1967) was a rainy season 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade Op in HAU NGHIA and TAY NINH Provinces. In this quarter, 2nd Bde [with **Task Force 4<sup>th</sup> Bn, 23<sup>rd</sup> Inf** supporting], ran offensive ops against VC units along the Oriental River from TAY NINH to DUC HOA; provided security for Engr activities; denied VC use of LOC in the TAOI; reinforced RVN ops; and helped secure polling places during the GVN general elections.

Behind the shield provided by 2nd Bde, civic actions projects were pushed with greater energy and results than possible earlier. The Bde killed 797 VC and took 150 POWs.

No less than 10 civic actions were completed in KOLEKOLE. Among them: improving the Hoc Mon maternity ward's appearance / sanitary conditions, renovating two buildings of the Bao Trai hospital, and helping build Bao Trai High School, dedicated 16 Dec 67. Toward the end of the op, 1/27<sup>th</sup> protected polling places by keeping Charlie busy outside town handling assaults. Eight miles S of Tay Ninh, after an exchange of gunfire, 17 Wolfhounds chased 15 VC 400 m. and killed 15 while taking only two US WIA.

US casualties were 144 KIA, 14 DOW, and 876 WIA. VC losses were 797 KIA (BC), 150 PW, and 34 HOI CHANHS. The enemy also lost supply caches and had LOCs interrupted, 202 tons rice & 50,000 rounds of small arms ammo captured, 577 tunnels destroyed in the MY QUI area, and 34 Hoi Chanhs rallied.

The 25th Division **MONSOON CAMPAIGN** began 14 May, 1967.

**OPERATION DIAMONDHEAD** (18 May - 7 December, 1967) was mounted by the 3rd Brigade as part of the 25<sup>th</sup> Division's 1967 monsoon campaign. This Op consisted of S&Ds and security missions conducted by the 3rd Bde from base camps at TAY NINH and DAU TIENG. Also, the 3rd Brigade had the mission to secure Engineer repairs on roads in his AO with the added effect of improving civilian use. Contact was minimal, but DIAMONDHEAD kept the enemy off balance, forced him to disperse still further and prevented him from taking large scale offensive action. Sniper and booby-trap incidents, which had increased during the elections, tapered off during the last 38 days. The largest single incident period involved an ambush patrol of 2/22nd Infantry "Regulars" that killed eight VC on 24 Nov. As a security measure, villages in/around Michelin rubber plantation were cordoned off and searched. Several families were moved to more secure areas to cut off VC who may have pressured them for supplies.

Results: 237 VC KIA (BC), 496 detainees, 4 HOI CHANHS; 103 indiv and 2 crew served weapons, 10 AK-47s, 34,000 SA rounds, 170 tons rice, 1500 lbs salt, 32 lbs of documents, and a small ford tractor that had been diverted from nation building. The opn also destroyed 1,900 bunkers and 929 m. of trench.

**OPERATION BARKING SANDS** consisting of simultaneous sub-operations KAWELA, AKUMU, WAIMEA, KUNIA) (19 May – 7 December, 19 67) were pacification and jungle clearing Ops by 1<sup>st</sup> Bde in CU CHI and TRANG BANG Districts, HAU NGHIA Province and PHU HOA District - BINH DUONG Province. [All these ran concurrently, individual units switching from one to another as needed.]

This set of Sub-Operations involved cutting the Ho Bo Woods generally north of Trang Bang. Operation ATLANTA (later in the year) leveled the once impregnable Iron Triangle; and SARATOGA dealt with Filhol Rubber Plantation and parts of Hobo Woods]. Numerous small unit actions, which included Bushmaster (extensive Co-size patrols), Control & Search of suspected VC hamlets, Roadrunner ops (mine sweeping of roads) and checkmate (unannounced road blocks to check for VC and supplies being moved by surface transport) enabled the Bde to reduce NLF ability to move freely. In addition, S&D missions using airmobile assaults into the IRON TRIANGLE were run when intel located VC units in the area. It ALSO proved to be a successful test of airlifting light artillery to exploit intel targets. Arty support for BARKING SANDS envisioned new concepts which proved successful in jungle war against guerilla forces. This operation, as never before, used the airlift of light artillery batteries to exploit important intel. Further, it was in BARKING SANDS that the concept of a minimum of one artillery battalion equivalent would be used to support any maneuver force larger than a platoon. The results were a greater kill ratio per arty round fired and it certainly confused the enemy as to the size force opposing him. In many cases the weight of artillery accomplished the mission with fewer friendly casualties. The extra artillery provided a greater volume of fire which saved many lives and reduced the loss of equipment in Rome Plow ops.

However, the idea of large scale land-clearing in such hostile environment was especially daunting since there were no guidelines for doing it. The Tomahawks had to "write the book" during the mission. (See above.) The **4/23d Infantry (Mech)** hit three obstacles during these ops: weather, terrain and the enemy. Each would at times slow the Bn's progress, but all obstacles were met and overcome as clearing proceeded. The extra operational and logistical requirements needed were massive. **4/23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry (Mech)** was dependent on air resupply and evacuation. Millions of lbs of supplies were brought in, nearly overburdening Support Plt. Despite difficulties, supplies continued to arrive and Supply platoon's outstanding performance reflects highly on the support group's devotion to duty -- all too often ignored by historians. Their faithful execution of their mission was critical in the mission's success.

Initially, 4/9th Infantry and 2/14<sup>th</sup> Infantry swept thru without making much contact. Rome Plows from 27th LCT, secured by **4/23d Infantry (Mech)** cleared more than 90% of the 13,000 acre sanctuary in 56 days. **4/23d Infantry (Mech)** devised a method by which operations were carried out by three LCTs, each of eight Rome plows and two conventional bulldozers, a security force, and a combined arms force for search and reaction. The security force was usually a mechanized infantry company (minus a rifle Plt,) and a tank Plt. Since enemy base camps and tunnels were frequently found, each security force contained a search group of one Inf Plt and an Engineer squad. When an enemy base was discovered, the LCT worked while the search group gathered information and enemy materiel before destroying the camp. The combined arms force worked with the same plow team throughout to insure close teamwork. Helicopters sprayed secondary growth with defoliants. The area was honey-combed with trenches, bunkers and tunnels that were extensively booby-trapped. One multi-level underground complex covered 2,000 m. and yielded cameras, film, printing presses and type, in addition to caches of weapons and



ammo. BARKING SANDS results were: 480 enemy KIA, 463 indiv and 29 crew-served weapons captured. Food caches yielded 196 tons rice.

[Ed note: Op **Barking Sands** appears to have been conducted via four sub-operation names as well as its own.]

Intel studies prior to **BARKING SANDS** indicated that elements of 1st Battalion, MR4, 7th Bn/CU CHI District and 2d Bn, GO MON District were operating in the AO. Strength of each of these units was 200-300 men. The CU CHI "QUYET CHIEN II". Local force platoon with a strength of approx 25 men, was known to be operating in the PHU HOA DONG-BEN CO area. Generally these units will disperse subordinate Co's through the area and mass only for offensive action. 2d Bn/Go Mon generally operates to the Sand E of PHU HOA DONG Village while the 1st Bn/MR4 and 7th Bn/CU CHI District operates to the NW and SW of the village. Agent reports indicated considerable VC activity in the vic of the FILHOL, middle BOI LOI and HO BO Woods. VC irregulars and the above mentioned Bn's are supposed to have considerable control over activities in the villages and surrounding areas. Also was reported that the BOI LOI and HO BO WOODS had long been a major VC base area for elements of the D14, 1st Bn MR4 and 7th Bn, MR4 (CU CHI). The 1st Bn MR4 located in the north central HO BO WOODS with elements dispersed throughout the area and in the villages to the W. D14 Bn was reported spread throughout the BOI LOI WOODS. The 7th Bn/ CU CHI was reported dispersed with one company in north FILHOL Plantation, one company in THAI MY area, and one company in TRUNG LAP area. The enemy pattern throughout the monsoon was to avoid decisive contact with US operations, continue resupply and proselytizing, and harassment of RF/PF outpost and small unit operations by US forces.

9. ( C) Mission: a. **OPERATION KAWELA** - 1st Bde (-) assault in Iron Triangle to destroy VC/NVA field fortifications and forces and deny the area as a safe haven for future enemy attacks in TAY NINH-BINH DUONG Provinces. b. Op AKUMU - 1st Brigade, 25th Inf Division and 7th Regiment, 5th ARVN Division conducted cordon and search and pacification ops in PHU HOA DONG village. c. Operation WAIMEA - 1st Brigade conducted offensive ops in RACH TRA Stream area to destroy VC/NVA forces and installations. d. Operation KUNIA - 1st Brigade conducted ops to eliminate the HO BO WOODS as a VC base area by 31 October 1967 through: tactical operations to destroy known and suspected VC forces in the area, jungle clearing with Rome Plows in accordance with directed priorities, and destruction of VC field fortifications.

10. ( C) Concept of Operation:

a.) **Op KAWELA** - Bns conducted S&D missions employing airmobile combat assaults into Iron Triangle and along the west side of SAIGON River south of Iron Triangle. A river crossing was conducted by 4/9 Inf and **4<sup>th</sup> Bn, 23rd Infantry (Mech)** to exploit intelligence reports in the Iron Triangle. One Battalion from 3d Brigade served as a blocking force for river crossings.

b. **Op AKUMU** - conducted in three phases: (1) Phase I (D-1 thru D+2) On D-1 CORDON forces generally located around PHU HOA DONG. 1st Bde and 7th ARVN Regt, both with 3 Bns reinforced conducted cordon and search ops. Village festival began on D+1. (2) Phase II (D+3 thru D+16) 1st Brigade and 7th

ARVN Regt continued cordon and search each with 2 Bns (+) and conducted S&Ds in assigned AO. 7th ARVN Regt ran clearing, relocation, RD and construction ops in PHU HOA DONG Village. (3) Phase III - 7th ARVN Regt establishes population and resource control and continues clearing, relocation and construction operations.

c.) **Op WAIMEA** – also in three phases: (1) Phase I – 2/7 (ARVN) conducted S&D ops and saturation night ambush patrolling in zone between two phase lines through D+1. On D+2 Bn conducted S&D ops; and saturation night ambushes in zone between phase line PERCH and SAIGON River. (2) Phase II – 2/7 (ARVN) continued S&D operations and saturation night ambush patrolling between PL PERCH and SAIGON River. 4/12 Inf [ARVN?] conducted CA on LZ 3. Conducted S&D ops and saturation night ambush patrolling within assigned objective area. D Troop 3/4th Cav screened along the road from vic XT796124 to vic XT754073. 2/14 Inf ran simultaneous mock assaults on LZs; occupied objective KING; resupplied and made preparations to establish a patrol base; moved to and occupied ambush sites in objective areas. 4/7 (ARVN) occupied objective area; prepared to establish a Bn patrol base; moved to and occupied ambush sites within objective area. (3) Phase III – 2/7 (ARVN) withdrew across phase line PERCH and ran S&D ops between phase lines PERCH and BASS. 2/14 Inf (-) conducted ?? on LZ and S&D ops within objective areas. 4/7 (ARVN) made assaults on LZ and S & D ops within objective area, as did 4/12<sup>th</sup> Inf. D Trp 3/4th Cav screened along road from XT796124 to vicinity XT754073.

d.) **Op KUNIA** - 1st Brigade conducted combat operations with 4th/9th, 2nd/14th and **TF 4th Bn 23d Infantry (M)** in HO BO WOODS and 3/22<sup>nd</sup> Infantry operating north of SAIGON River, 8 Jul 67 --26 Jul 67..

Operation BARKING SANDS was to eliminate HO BO WOODS as a VC base, destroy known and suspected VC forces, pacify CU CHI / TRANG BANG Districts in HAU NGHIA Province, and PHU HOA District of BINH DUONG Province. Counter guerrilla warfare techniques were employed to include patrolling, "Checkmates" (road blocks in unannounced locations to check for VC or supplies being moved), bushmaster and cordon and search ops in cooperation with RF / PF's and with ARVN units. Engineers upgraded Highway PA [??] leading from CU CHI to PHU CUONG, the capital of adjacent BINH DUONG Province. Daily convoys now run between these. Small unit ops are also staged from dispersed battalion- or company- size bases throughout the district which have allowed US units to limit VC capability to move freely, night or day. Therefore, VC control of AO has been reduced. A "Buddy" op conducted with the PHU DUC PF and the 494th RF Co, illustrating the type of ops employed, 19 Jun after intel was received through the Combined Operation Center (COC) at TRANG BANG, that a VC squad was operating vic XT5130. Through three contacts that day, the squad was eliminated, resulting in five VC KIA (BC), three VC [no info].

Activities of **4th Bn, 23d Infantry (M)**: 19 May - 6 June 1967) Op MANHATTAN. (7 - 11 June 67) Bn conducted daily S&D operations in the AO and prepared for Op KAWELA 12 June - 16 July, and 8 - 24 July, and Op AKUMU. (25 July - 14

September 19 67) The battalion conducted Search & Destroy operations in the FILHOL Plantation area and Eagle Flights within the 1st Brigade Area of Operations.

The main effort was concentrated on ROME PLOW operations in THAI MY area. In conjunction with 65th Engr Bn, Co A cleared Cu Chi Base Camp perimeter near Mom Moa. Daily ROAD RUNNER missions between TRANG BANG and CU CHI were held at irregular intervals from 15 September - 15 November 67 on Op KUNIA. From 19 November - 7 December 67, the battalion was OPCON [under operational control of] 2d Brigade. (9) **AKUMU** was to conduct a cordon and search and pacification operation in PHU HOA DONG Village (XT715195), BINH DUONG Province, located five km northeast of the Division base camp at CU CHI, and at the east edge of the FILHOL Plantation. The cordon and search and pacification ops were conducted jointly with the 7th ARVN Regiment located in PHU HOA DONG. Intel indicated the presence of 1st Bn, Military Region IV and 7th Bn Cu Chi District elements. Strength of each Bn was 200-300.

1st Brigade, 25th Inf Division, including the OPCON 3rd Squad, 4th Cavalry (-) was the control headquarters for the execution and continuation of the cordon while 7th ARVN Regt controlled executing search and clearing of village interior. Intel prior to the op indicated presence of elements of 1st Battalion, Military Region IV (MR IV), 7th Bn, CU CHI District and the 2nd Bn, CO MON District. The strength of each battalion was 200 - 300 men. In addition a VC local force Platoon of 25 men was known to operate in the area. Considerable VC activity in the adjacent FILHOL Plantation and HO BO Woods was known to be influential in the activities in the village and surrounding areas. VC fortifications, installations, booby traps and mines were found throughout the operation. Contact with VC forces was light for the first days of the operation, consisting of sporadic sniper fire from groups of 2 or 3 VC.

\* \* \* \* \*

13 July contact increased markedly at 130148 hours, **Co B, 4th Bn (M), 23rd Infantry** received 10 rds of RPG-2 fire vic XT686216, damaging 2 APCs, and resulting in one US KHA, eight US WHA, three VC KIA(BC), two VC KIA (possible) and the capture of one RPG-2 launcher with two rounds. At 130142 hours a four man LP from **Co B/4th Bn (M), 23rd Infantry** engaged three VC at XT687212, resulting in three US WHA and unknown VC losses. 10 Rds of RPG were received damaging two APCs. resulting in 1 US KIA and 8 WIA, and 3 VC KIA (poss.) . At 130142 a four man listening post of B Co, 4th Bn(M), 23rd Inf engaged 3 VC at XT687212, resulting in 3 US WIA and unknown VC losses. At 130225 hours, **A Co 4th Bn (M), 23rd Infantry** received sniper fire at XT702208, resulting in 1 US WHA. At 131440 hours, **Companies B and C** engaged an unknown VC force at XT664218 resulting in two US WHA. Finally, **A Co** received sniper fire received XT702208 wounding 1 man. At 131440 hrs **B and C Co's** received 23 RPG-2 rds and 82mm mortar rds at XT669198. Fire was returned resulting in 3 VC KIA (BC), 1 VC KIA poss. One US soldier was KIA, and 15 US WIA.

There was light contact until 18 July when **B Co 4th Battalion, 23d Infantry (M)** received 23 RPG-2 rounds and 82mm mortar rounds at XT669198. Fire was returned resulting in three VC KIA (BC), one VC KIA (possible), one US KHA and 15 US WHA. Contact was believed to be with 2nd Co, 1st Bn, MR IV.

At the start of the operation a hamlet festival was conducted by Civil Affairs team to explain the purpose of the US presence in the village to over 19,000 persons. MEDCAPS and Catholic services (in the village church) were held throughout the operation. Operation AKUMU challenged the VC in a formerly secure stronghold, and greatly diminished VC influence "at the back door" of CU CHI Base. In addition, VC supply and movement routes through FILHOL Plantation to HO BO Woods were severely disrupted.

Results of the operation were: VC KIA (BC) 15, VC KIA (possible) 11, HOI CHANH 1. Enemy equipment destroyed: 237 bunkers, 74 tunnels, 49 foxholes, 970 meters of trench, 55 punji pits, 43 military structures, 22 AT mines, 27 AP mines, 15 sampans, four 82mm mortar rds, two 60mm mortar rds, 16 CHICOM grenades, five rifle grenades, two US claymores, nine US hand grenades, two docking sites, two misc. drums, 57 rds CHICOM carbine ammo, one rd M16 ammo, two stick mines, two lbs clothing, Misc, 15 lbs rice, two 105 canister, one hat. Enemy equipment captured: 1,198 rds SA ammo, three pistol belts, one lb documents, one sign-minefield, one flashlight, 1 compass, 1 pr black gloves, 1 poncho (VC), 3 RPG-2 rocket launchers, one RPG-2 booster, 12 pr sandals, one hammock, one pair trousers, one M1 rifle - cal .30, one canteen with cup, two protective masks, two 57 RR containers, one canvas bag, 15 M79 rds, two belts with clip for AK-47 rifles, one 82mm mortar tube and elevating mechanism, two .45 cal pistols, one magazine - AK-47, ½ lb med supplies, one lb clothing, 560 pilasters, one holster - .45 cal, one canteen cover, one magazine .45 cal, one CHICOM rifle, one CHICOM 7.6mm red stock carbine.

Op Kunai and sub-operation casualty details for the period:

**On 13 June, Franklin D Chopper of A Co was KIA.**

**On 23 June, B Co lost Ernest L. Hard was KIA..**

**On 25 June, 1967, two B Co men were KIA: Wayne V. Gordon, and Allen J. Cagle.**

**Roy E. Grantham, C Co., was KIA 28 June (accidental claymore mine detonation).**

**Clinton E. Crawford A Co; Robert Pindaric, C Co, Herbert Sherrill, C Co, and William E Taylor, C Co, were KIA on 29 June 67.**

Robert S. Mummer, B Co was KIA 5 July 67.

**7 July, 1967, Floyd Holyfield Jr, Robert T. Kubiniciak, Stanley F. Patterson, David W. Qualls, Harold Taylor, Lee Roy Taylor, and Lawrence Wilson, all C Co were KIA. by a night ground and mortar attack on their NDP..**

Other 4<sup>th</sup> of th3 23<sup>rd</sup> Members KIA later this period and not associable with specific operations were:

Michael J Shehl of B Co, 13 July  
Stanley Tomaszewski, B Co, 18 July  
Robert L. Wilson, B Co, 1 August  
Larry T. Chandler, C Co, 5 August  
Robert F. Haines, HHC, 27 August  
Richard A. Jacobs, HHC, 27 August  
Albert J. Leggett, HHC, 27 Aug  
Jessie L. Moore, HHC, 27 August  
Gary L. Love, HHC, 28 August  
Wayne I. McDaniel, C Co, 2 September  
Hollis R. McKinney, Jr, C Co, 2 September  
Larry A. Merrill, C Co, 2 September  
Thomas E. Russ, A Co, 5 September  
Kenneth E. Treibley, HHC, 14 September  
Walter E. Ellis, B Co, 17 September

\* \* \* \* \*

*June 13, 2003*

*I.e., Casualty search. (cont)*

*Thanks for your reply.*

*Date of action: 29 Jun 67*

*Province: Filhol Plantation*

*Unit: C 4/23, 25<sup>th</sup> Division*

*MOS: Medic, Name*

*Unknown*

*Rank: ? E4*

*Race: Caucasian*

*Also, there is one other casualty on same day.*

*MOS: ? Track*

*mechanic*

*Rank: ? Sgt. E5*

*E-mails:*

*Race: Caucasian*

*After 2nd & 3rd Platoons got to you --, they came with 2nd platoon on our left (I think), 3rd platoon on our right (missing/omitted?). Both platoons formed up on line and assaulted deeper into the rubber. What was left of 1st platoon pulled into edge of a clearing to support resupply & medevac. Seems on one of the assaults, one of the tracks was disabled. Eventually a track mechanic (I think) went forward to see if he could get it to run and recover it. While standing in front of track, VC exploded a command detonated bomb. He was launched towards enemy, lost both legs to near his hips. Because of where he landed, it took them quite awhile to retrieve him. Eventually, he was brought back to our clearing, we got him on the next chopper. Despite his condition, he was still very heavy to get into chopper. I'm pretty sure he was a NCO, but am ashamed I do not remember his name. Never heard whether he made it either. Thanks for your help.*

*Paul C 4/23*

June 13, 03

Paul: -- Sorry it took me a day to respond to the question as this is a whole new opening for me and Nam. I haven't talked about these things for 35 years and know that this is the only group that can possibly understand what I went through. I was assigned as senior medic to Charlie Company end of June '67, but did not go into field until middle of July. I heard about this medic the first day in medical battalion. He had been airlifted to Saigon Hospital for transport to Japan. Our battalion Doctor saw him at 25th Hospital in Cu Chi the day of the action on 29 June. He said it was one of the worst groin wounds he had ever seen. His prognosis was pretty dim. I don't have to go into detail that he would never had been able to father children. The only word that we ever got back is that he did survive and was in Japan. I can't totally verify that for a fact as I never knew his name and I did not check further. It always bothered me that when we had a medevac'd out that we never received follow-up disposition reports. If you want to check on MOS for medics it would be listed either as 91B10 or 91B20. Hope this helps you in your search. [This was probably Sp5 William Taylor, C Co.- ed.] John -- Little Doc

June 13, 03

John (Little Doc)

Thanks so much, then he made it. With all the blood he lost and the time it took to get the Medevac in, that is a miracle in itself. I cannot even imagine surviving with his condition.

I have included the circumstances of the 6/29/67 ambush involving the medic. You seem well versed with the medic records etc, but I sense that you might not want any more detail. Wanted you to consider, before you read further.

When **the 1st platoon C 4/23**, was first hit, one of the many RPGs, hit the .50 ammo box, coming from almost directly in front of our track. It just missed the drivers head. I was just jumping off the track. The explosion knocked me out for (?) a short time. When I came to, I had landed on my ass, M-16 in my lap, back against the left rear sprocket. Landing here put me just barely out of direct view of the main bunker. A large piece of the 50 cal box, still smoking, filled with holes peeled out of one side, was stuck in the left front of my flak jacket. I burned my hands tearing it away. The TC, Bob Pendarvis was killed instantly. They were all around us. Mostly firing from bunkers & spider holes. The initial claymores had taken down some of our guys to my front. I rolled over and started firing my (freshly cleaned) M-16 towards the main bunker. 2nd round, 2nd magazine, jammed. I carried an assembled, 3 piece, .22 cal cleaning rod taped to the bottom of the forestock. In the excitement to clear the spent cartridge, I grabbed the cleaning rod in the middle, gave it a yank, and now I'm left holding 2 pieces of a cleaning rod. The electrical tape did not break. Rolled over on my back, tilted barrel in air, dropped in one piece, then jammed the other section on top. Cleared the spent casing. Reloaded, one shot, jammed again. Muzzle loader style, (I think the civil war guys could have reloaded faster). Repeated this one more time, cursed the piss poor piece of crap and crawled to the back of the track. That's when I found the medic. He had been riding facing backwards, and stayed on the track when the rest of us dismounted. After exploding on the ammo box, the tip of the RPG traveled along the top of track and entered the crack of

his butt, exiting through front. The whole crotch of his pants were gone and the edges of the fabric were as if you took a lighter and burned it black. A lot of his critical parts are missing. The explosion (and/or) antenna had knocked a giant red ant nest onto him and his wound. As I couldn't use bug juice, I used my bare hands & did the best I could to clear them away. His medic bag was torn to shreds and not usable. The back of his flak jacket bore the signs of the secondary shrapnel rings of the RPG. I tried to tell him he would be all right, his eyes & my face told a different story. Being a medic, he certainly knew the score. I tried to use my first aid bandage to try to control his bleeding, I could find no way to tie it tight to stop the bleeding. I felt absolutely useless to manage his bleeding, Finally, I placed the bandage in his hand, drew it towards his torso, and shouted for him to hold it as tight as he could. He seemed barely strong enough to do this. He never screamed out, and tried to help the best he could. After giving him some water, I "borrowed" his M79, and one bandolier he had on him.

Initially, being with him behind the track, we seemed to be in the shadow of the worse fire. I think Charlie was waiting for us to pull back from the main bunker. Suddenly, the fire started from our rear. The tracks are getting hit, from three sides, making it suicidal to try to get our track's 50, back on line, from topside. Most of us have burned up about everything we had or could collect. By now, many of the M16 [rifle] have expired (these were the ones with the 3 prong open flash suppressor). Reggie Kern, moved further away, to secure our flank. Vinnie McConnel finally got the ramp door open, got inside and started pitching out all the stuff he could. Pendarvis had to be removed from the turret from the inside of the track, a very difficult task. Shouldn't go any further with this. Anyhow Vinnie finally got the 1st squad 50 back on line, and along with the 2nd squad 50, finally suppressed the main bunker. To my other flank, Lowell Carrico had shrapnel wounds to his arms, but kept firing with one of the few m16's still firing.

By now we could hear the other 2 platoons, with Capt Trammel, in the distance coming to rescue us. I moved away from the track with all the m79 ammo and grenades I could drag. I used the 3" deep tread mark left by our track as my trench. Some of the 50's cooked their barrels, others, were out of ammo. By now all our 50 turrets were rotated, and those still firing, mostly over the back of our tracks. When Vinnie opened up with 50 over my head, I thought my ears were going to burst. Like ice picks hitting both ear drums. I'm sure it must have been worse on the medic, located right under the mouth of the barrel. Looking back I could see him with just his head propped up, and a stare I'll never forget. There is the 10,000 mile stare and then there is the lost your manhood stare. I will never forget that. In the background is Vinnie, on the gun, with the driver, acting as loader, standing next to him, his disconnected coiled commo cord dangling in his face. Braver men, I'll never meet.

I'm need to end it here. My guess is he was evacuated by around 10 am. This skirmish lasted till mid to late afternoon.

Wanted you to know the circumstances surrounding a brother medic, whom you may have replaced. God bless, you combat medics had the toughest job over there.

Let me know if you ever hear from him. Unless this happened to one of us, I don't think anyone could measure the psychological stress he must live with.

Paul C 4/23

Jun 13, 03

Doug, Rick, Neil, Richard

Thank you all for solving 2 lapses of memory. It looks like now that William A Taylor SP5 KIA 6/29/67 is the track mechanic whose name I was looking for. Also, it appears that the medic made it back.

By using the [thevirtualwall.org](http://thevirtualwall.org) site, you recommended, I have solved another question. On 7 July 67, **C 4/23** was in a night laager position, when there were seven KIAs. I had the names of 6, but, with what info I could find, could not determine the 7th. By clicking on the remembrances at the bottom, of on all that had them, I found two notes, one of which, written by someone who was there. He reminisces about sitting on Capt Trammel's track with Lt Stanley Patterson, who is the 7<sup>th</sup> [casualty – ed.].

I remember that there was a special ceremony, along the Cu Chi perimeter for all of the KIAs. Boots, Rifles, M-16's with bayonets, Dog tags for each. Live rounds were used for the 21 gun salute. I think the battalion commander spoke.

I would like to know how to list these casualties on the **4/23** web site. Whom do I contact? What's the best way to verify?

It turns out that between 29 Jun and 7 Jul, '67, 3 soldiers from **C 4/23** named Taylor were KIA. Lawrence Wilson was KIA, literally on his last night in the field. What a terrible tragedy for him & his family. The 6/29/67 operation had made C Company very short handed, so he was kept out in the field.

Thanks for helping this rusty memory.

Paul C **4/23**

Feb 22, 04

Brock, I believe it was the Hobo Woods, because we were trying to break through to the boonies/trees to rescue a TANK assigned to the so-called combat engineers that lost a track. The tank was sitting in the open not returning fire even though the first rocket disabled their left track. Naturally Charlie knew we were coming and took 32 out of the War. I can still remember the bluish smoke-ring rising from the RPG firing position, but we had to wait a second too long for 34 to clear our field of fire. Just as we received the all clear to fire, the second RPG took out 32, my left foot, and the five guys with me. No one died, which the first time an APC took direct hits from a RPG and survived to my knowledge at that time in Nam. The third rocket went right past me and hit our ammo, setting off a lot of fireworks! I guess we were all lucky on 9-27-67. I know I feel fortunate to have survived; for 25 FELLOW SOLDIERS died that same day.

Brock, I must have been in the third platoon since I was on 32 and I remember Jack Knight was with me that day. Also Bobby Mitchell, 34 Larry Pipes, and Gerry McNeely of 32, but both wounded and in hospital before that day.

Dan F.

July 25, 11

Paul, -- John Trammell and I talked about that ground attack while at Ft. Lewis. It was in June and I had only been in the field for a few days. Many KIA's and many more wounded. We could have been over-run that night but for some reason they cut off their attack. John is haunted by that night and blames himself for it. I was too new



*to know what was up or down, I just know I went through all my pressure bandages and morphine and had to get more from other medics.*

*Was a great day with Tomahawks last week. They are a great bunch of troopers and ready for combat.*

*Doc John*

*Jul 26, 11*

*Well, I was there [battle where John T is mentioned] and just in the last 4 years have had to talk about that battle with a couple of the spouses and daughters of those who were killed in that battle. I do not see who or why anyone would want to blame John Trammell for it, the gooks just had more mortars, ammo, and fighters than we did and they took us out. I have e-mailed Doc several times about this very topic and I told him how I felt, stated above, and we seem to agree. I have John's address also and have talked with him several times. I don't know what shit is hitting the fan, but I would question any comments about the incident except to say.....they got us, and end of story. That is what war is all about I thought??? I don't remember where we were but there was a village close by that we were going to hit the next morning before the ambush came that is. There were mortars coming in, bullets everywhere, rockets, RPG's, you name it and I would swear that the gooks were inside the perimeter!*

*Bob C.*

*Jan 23, 08*

*I was assigned to the 25th Infantry Division, Company B 4th Battalion, 23rd infantry (Mech). in July 67. When I got to the unit we were asked if any of us knew how to drive a tractor, being raised on a ranch, I said yes. I was given a crash course on how to drive a track and assigned to the 2nd platoon which of course is a line track.*

*I drove this track for 2 months during which I received a shrapnel wound to my leg and foot, like you was patched up and back to work I went near the end of 67 I became the Company Commanders driver, when his driver was rotating back to the world. I believe in early January 68 Capt. K (cuts off)*

*Korecki was assigned as our company commander. 2 days before he was killed he sent me back to Cu Chi to set up our new track. I left in the evening by helicopter and a very good friend of mine from base camp Bruce E .Engstrom came out and was going to drive the c.o.'s track while I was getting the new one, along with Capt. Korecki my friend Bruce was killed during that battle. If you remember the c.o.'s track, it had Miss Kathleen on the sides and Engstrom's revenge on the front. After Korecki was killed Capt. Sutton was assigned as company commander.*

*During the ambush on the 12th of February 68, Capt Sutton was on the ground and I moved our track and got up in to the TC hatch to man the 50. I got shot in the face. I know that I was dusted off to the medevac hospital at the base camp, then taken to Japan and then back to the world. I was at Letterman General Hospital in San Francisco and stayed there until my discharge from the army in November 68.*

*This is my first contact with anybody from our unit since I was discharged li have*

*been looking in the American Legion and D.A.V. magazines of which I am a member for any reunions but have not seen anything. I was thinking maybe there wasn't many of us still around. I want to thank you for being so dedicated to finding us long lost tomahawks. I also wanted to let you know that I have a slab of a tree with the unit crest and a brass plate that reads "your share of the hobo woods " member TF Tomahawk 4th bn. (M) 23rd. inf. Forstmeisters 1967. I have this on display in my book case.*

*Thank you .*

*Joe Carvelho*

*July 25, 11*

*Paul, -- John T. and I talked about that ground attack while at Ft. Lewis. It was in June and I had only been in the field for a few days. Many KIA's and many more wounded. We could have been over-run that night but for some reason they cut off their attack. John is haunted by that night and blames himself for it. I was too new to know what was up or down, I just know I went through all my pressure bandages and morphine and had to get more from other medics.*

*Was a great day with Tomahawks last week [reunion]. They are a great bunch of troopers and ready for combat.*

*Doc John*

*July 25, 11*

*Paul,*

*John T. did mention that a Lt. Platoon Leader that he could not remember had the smarts to start pitching some flares out by the perimeter so the helicopter gun-ships could get a bearing on where to put their fire in. He feels it was his actions that possibly did save our being completely over-run. Many dead VC inside the perimeter next morning. As I said, I was so green I was in shock after that battle. I remember asking another medic afterwards where I could volunteer for the Red Cross after that night!!*

*Doc*

*July 25, 11*

*There was a PLT LDR who received the Silver Star --can't remember his name --- good guy .I think he was wounded in the arm ---maybe more---probably him . CPT Trammell was really down --but it sounded like they did everything he/ they possibly could but as you said it was BAD ! Same thing happened to us [B Co – ed.] in July right before I rotated off--- enemy bodies everywhere --had to have help choppered out to get our tracks in . Don Holland our CO was pretty shaken up too !!! We had already been very short handed ---we had to stand down and retrain ----I thought about becoming a Chaplin after that !!!!!*

*Paul L.*

*Jul 25, 2011*

*I believe it was sometime in June ---C Co got in one hell of an ambush/ firefight ---we were in base camp listening on the net --it sounded like hand to hand in some cases*

*with comments like their all over me etc . Shortly after that or right after that CPT T rotated out of C Co, he was seriously affected by what had happened---don't know the casualty info but it had to be bad!!!*

*Paul L.*

*Jul 26, 11*

*Well, I was there [battle where John T is mentioned] and just in the last 4 years have had to talk about that battle with a couple of the spouses and daughters of those who were killed in that battle. I do not see who or why anyone would want to blame [him] for it, the gooks just had more mortars, ammo, and fighters than we did and they took us out. I have e-mailed Doc several times about this very topic and I told him how I felt, stated above, and we seem to agree. I have his address also and have talked with him several times. I don't know what shit is hitting the fan, but I would question any comments about the incident except to say.....they got us, and end of story. That is what war is all about I thought??? I don't remember where we were but there was a village close by that we were going to hit the next morning before the ambush came that is. There were mortars coming in, bullets everywhere, rockets, RPG's, you name it and I would swear that the gooks were inside the perimeter!*

*Bob C.*

*May 5, 2012*

*I knew Massey well. Just talked to him. He was a track/gun TC in one of the 4.2 mortar tracks. I commanded the 4.2 FDC (Fire Direction Control) command track. I arrive in country in June '67 and left June '68. The flash incident occurred about 30 feet from me.*

*We always had the mounted 4.2 tubes in our tracks. There was an FDC bunker in Cu Chi that would have suggested the supported the perimeter a few years earlier.*

*We usually bivouacked with Recon Platoon or whatever line company we were supporting in the field. Contrary to what someone else posted we never had an issue of the gun playing havoc with the floor of the tracks. In my entire year in country we only had one flash incident in the 4.2 platoon By count we had 2 KIA's. One to the flash burn [Treibley – ed.] and one driver due to a mine.*

*their new basketball practice arena after him a couple of years ago.*

*Terry Potter Sgt E5*

\* \* \* \* \*

**22 September B Co 4<sup>th</sup> Bn, 23 Infantry (M)** located & evacuated 12 printing sorting trays, 18x24 inches w/20 lbs type, one tool box w/assorted printers tools, one 9mm, 49 SMG folding stock, two printing presses layout book, nine .50 cal ammo boxfuls type, 80 lbs loose type, five strips paper, two ink rollers and one VC kerosene lantern.

**Carl M. Greene, Bravo Co was KIA this day.**

**Michael J. Koller was KIA, 29 September, 1967.**

4 October – Co **B/ 4th Bn. 23d Infantry (M)** rec'd small arms fire from an estimated three VC. Returned fire with SA & AW. Results: two VC KIA (BC), one VC WIA. One RPG-7 RL and booster, one US M1 carbine were located & evacuated.

**Wayne M. Cardinal, 22 October, HHC KIA**  
**Roy E. Conrad, C Co, 25 October KIA**  
**Robert C. Harkins, C Co 25 October KIA**  
**Donnie C. Harrell, B Co, 25 October KIA**  
**Robert E. Musselman, C Co, 25 October KIA**

Op BARKING SANDS results: a.) Personnel losses: Enemy (Figures are inclusive of four sub-ops) KIA (BC) 323, KBA (BC) 47, KIA (POSS) 715, KBA (POSS) 131, VC PW 85, HOI CHANH 10, Civil Defendants - 229, b. Combat Equipment Losses: (1) Friendly: APC – 27, M125A carrier - one; M60 - two: M16 - five; 90 mm recoilless rifles - one; M79 - four; AN/PRC-25 - six; AN/PRC-46 - two; AN/VRC-53 - two; one starlight, scope; mine detector- one; binoculars – five; compasses – six; flak vest – 6; gas mask –21; 21; helmet, combat, vehicle, crewman's - seven; wristwatch - two; tool kit - one; surgical instrument and supply set - one; TA 50-901, set -one. (2) Enemy: SA ammo - 103,565 rds assorted; HE ammo - 2,863 rds assorted; mines & booby traps - 1,183; structures - 680; fortifications - 5,421; tunnels - 917; sampans - 124; 530 foxholes and spider-holes; bicycles - 2; clothing – 529 lbs; explosives - 56 lbs; trench - 1,650 meters; punji pits - 118. Enemy Equipment Captured: 229 assorted SA weapons; 21 assorted heavy wpons; 543 lbs of documents; 240 lbs of medical supplies; 950 tons of rice.

\* \* \* \* \*

From the Division Quarterly report for the period ending **31 July: LTC Thomas Ware** assumed command of **4<sup>th</sup> Bn, 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry (M)**.

*From the Division Quarterly report for the period ending 31 October: On 1 August, 1967, 3rd Bde, 4th Infantry Division was re-designated 3rd Brigade, 25th Infantry Division by USARPAC General Order Number 144, dated 27 July 1967. Authority cited therein was DA Message 824266, dated 19 July 1967.*

\* \* \* \* \*

From The Evening Standard, 6 November, 1967, an article entitled “Giant Bulldozers Flattening 12,000 Acres of Jungle”: “Previous infantry operations in the [Ho Bo] woods were particularly dangerous because there was little room to maneuver and the troops could only see about 25 yards ahead. Two weeks ago, a battalion of the U.S. 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division was ambushed in a similar woods farther north. Viet cong riflemen tied to trees killed 55 and wounded 96. Among the dead was Battalion Commander LTC Terry Allen, Jr. . . . [The] dozers are protected by a mechanized infantry battalion, the **4<sup>th</sup> of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Inf Regiment** . . . “I’m 42 going on 52,” laughs LTC Thomas A. Ware, 42, of Chillicothe, Ohio. “I’ve aged 10 years in this operation.”

\* \* \* \* \*

From McGarrigle, Combat Operations: Taking the Offensive October 1966 October 1967. (pp 369-374): During the Rainy Season Campaign, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade was composed of 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion 9<sup>th</sup> Inf, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion 14<sup>th</sup> Infantry, and **4<sup>th</sup> Battalion 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry (Mech)**, and concentrated around Tay Ninh, Hau Nghia, and Binh Duong Provinces. 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division Intel placed the 3<sup>rd</sup> VC Bn in Boi Loi Woods, Ho Bo Woods, and Filhol Plantation. Rocket attacks were escalating in III CTZ. Through August, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade showed relatively low body count status, and after an ambush of 4/9<sup>th</sup> Inf with heavy losses, Generals Mears and Abrams met and replaced Col Carter with Col Edwin Marks, newly arrived from Germany. Col Marks was additionally tasked with the priority of destroying enemy base areas over the pacification mission. The first target was 60 sq kms of Ho Bo Woods (which had last been entered by Americans in January 1967.) This was Op Kunia, requiring four Artillery Battalions firing in support. Two Bns went north up Hiway 1 to 6A, west of Ho Bo Woods to establish FSBs, but two other Battalions got bogged down in mud and **4<sup>th</sup> Battalion 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry (Mech)** rushed to secure their area. Getting out took two days. On 20 September Rome Plows began. LTC Ware (**4<sup>th</sup> Bn 23<sup>rd</sup> Inf (Mech)**) formed three teams each with a Mechanized Infantry company, tank platoon and section of plows. Areas were first cleared by air strikes and artillery before plowing. Engineers pumped tunnel entrances full of water from the Saigon River, eventually softening the ground and collapsing sections. VC continually harassed land clearing teams until the operation ended on November 10.

\* \* \* \* \*

Jan 14, 04

*During the last days of August 1967, after having lost 3 drivers in 3 days our Colonel, concerned about the loss of life called the Recon Platoon together. He wanted to know if there was some way of preventing the drivers from dying due to land mines, the idea of extended laterals came out of it.*

*I am grateful to the Col. since I was the second driver to benefit from those laterals. For some reason I can't come up with his name. Maybe Farmer or someone can help me out. Recently I came across a post made by a member of the 5th mech., he stated in his post that he had invented the laterals. However from the dates he gave in his post they (the laterals) had already been out a year. They were a direct result by our Col., the ideas of the Recon platoon and then built by our Motor Pool. I might add that our motor pool did an excellent job 1) They were fabricated in a short period of time 2) I thought our motor pool produced better ones than what came out of the factory later.*

*Track 34 Driver – Joel*

\* \* \* \* \*

Order of Battle Qtr ending Nov 67 (in part):

1ST Brigade, 25th Infantry Division  
HHC, 1st Bde  
4th Bn, 9th Inf

2nd Bn, 14th Inf  
 4th Bn, (M), 23rd Inf  
 7th Bn, 11th Arty (DS)

\* \* \* \* \*

12. (C) Results inclusive of four sub-ops. [Casualties – can this be correct?]

a. Personnel

(1) Friendly	KHA	KBA	NIA	DOW	TOTAL
4 - 9	36	270	0	9	315
2 - 14	42	396	0	9	447
4 - 23	32	476	0	5	513
HHC	0	2	0	0	2

[Note: editor believes the KBA column reflects WIA.]

(2) Enemy (Figures are inclusive of four sub-operations)

KIA (BC)	-	323
KBA (BC)	-	47
KIA (POSS)	-	715
KBA (POSS)	-	131
VC PW -	-	85
HOI CHANH	-	10
Civil Defendants	-	229

\* \* \* \* \*

FROM 25<sup>TH</sup> INF Division LESSONS LEARNED:

Misc:

ITEM: Ear Infections.

DISCUSSION: A prominent problem among personnel in RVN, especially aviators, is infection in the ear canal, attributable to allowing non-potable shower water to get into the ears. Also, perspiration may accumulate inside the earphones of the flight helmet and drain into the ear.

OBSERVATION: Make a conscious effort to keep non-potable water out of ears. Clean ears often with Q-tips and alcohol. Use nylon net covers over the earphones in the flight helmet and clean these regularly. Report to a medical facility at first signs of pain, itching or discharge from ears.

ITEM: Rashes on Body.

DISCUSSION: Many people ignore rashes on various areas of the body and consider them insignificant. In the humid climate of Vietnam, there is a likelihood of developing fungal rashes, which can be complicated if not treated early.

OBSERVATION: When any rash appears on your body, go to a medical facility at once. The use of powder in underwear and socks helps to control rashes. Rashes will not usually disappear without treatment. [Editorial observation – if we could have kept clean, dry, and hand powder, we wouldn't have had rashes in the first place..]

\* \* \* \* \*

**OPERATION CAMDEN** (17 December - 31 December 1967) was conducted by 2nd and 3rd Brigades, 25th Inf Div, in HAU NGHIA, TAY NINH, and BINH DUONG Provinces to locate and destroy 101st NVA Regt which was reported to be in HOBO - BOI LOI WOODS and TRAPEZOID areas. This op included 2/22 Infantry (M) conducting a night tactical road march to establish a base to patrol the assigned area. 2/12th Infantry and 3/22nd Infantry air assaulted into an LZ vic XT585419 with 3/22nd Inf following 2/12th, and subsequently establishing bases/patrols in assigned areas. Maximum use was made of TAC AIR and arty throughout the op.

The unexpected presence of an enemy main force unit near CU CHI is partly explained by the rice harvest in progress and 101st NVA Regt was present to secure and oversee moving North. Many small unit actions, including armor-infantry S&D ops, combined recon intel platoon (CRIP), air assaults on LZs based on intel reports, and multi-Bn air assaults were conducted during CAMDEN.

3rd Bde, operating in the TRAPEZOID area, used mostly company-size airmobile assaults to interdict VC forces exfiltrating in front of mech infantry S&D ops. 2nd Bde in HOBO - BOI LOI WOODS, used tank-infantry teams and multi-Bn air assaults for S&D ops. VC losses were 109 KIA (BC) and four POW's. The VC also suffered destruction of several base camps and lost nearly 33 tons of rice. US forces had 27 KIA, one DOW), and 118 WIA. One of CAMDEN'S highlights was that it cost the enemy much food and ordinance. Over 65,000 lbs of rice and 100 lbs of soybean oil were taken from scattered caches. US forces captured more than 1,500 rds of small arms ammo and 20 weapons, plus destroyed approx 500 bunkers.

**OPERATION ATLANTA** (18 November – 23 December 1967) was a 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade operation mounted in IRON TRIANGLE to destroy the VC haven which had not seen any US operations since CEDAR FALLS in January 67. Enemy contact was made during the early stages in the southwest sector of IRON TRIANGLE where 2nd Bde had air assaulted some units, while others moved by land with Rome Plows. Most of the contacts were mech Infantry attacks on enemy positions from which the enemy initially fought fiercely, then pulled out. The discovery of documents as well as 178.5 tons rice in AN THUAN and PHU AN areas indicated a large transfer of rice from PHU HO DONG to storage areas in IRON TRIANGLE. With assistance from a BEN CAT District PF unit, approx 10,000 meters of inter-connecting tunnels were located, exploited, and destroyed. Rome Plows cleared a total of 10,995 acres. It turned into a major project for 65th Engineer Bn who rafted heavy vehicles, and after some experimenting, destroyed two mi. of tunnels. ATLANTA netted 1,467 VC KIA though but no big firefights took place. 123 enemy small arms and over 350,000 lbs of rice were seized.

Enemy cleverness in building and hiding tunnels lagged the engineers' ability to destroy them. Some were collapsed by cratering charges placed every 40 meters. When this method, though effective, proved burdensome, they tried flooding the tunnels to collapse them. The procedure was to clear jungle between the water and

the mouth of the tunnel. When a shortage of pipe occurred, the engineers ditched the water source closer to the *tunnel*. *Flooding however, did not completely destroy the tunnels so engineers floated explosives inside to finish them off.*

**OPERATION YELLOWSTONE I and II** (December 1967 – 24 February 1968) was a 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade S&D (Reconnaissance In Force) operation ranging from Saigon to the Cambodian border. Operations in War Zone C during this period were characterized by light contact with the exception of the battle at Suoi Cut/ Fire Support Base Burt, which went into the books as the biggest single action of 1967 for a 25th Division unit.

Info From Official Records: Operation Yellowstone was directed at neutralizing War Zone “C” in the north part of the Division TAOI by destroying NVA / VC forces and installations and completing several engineering projects to rebuild or construct road networks, US Special Forces (USSF)/Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) camps and the KATUM airfield. It began concurrently with operation SARATOGA which primarily directed its activities to the southern part of the TAOI.

1st Bde was committed to YELLOWSTONE from 1 Feb until its termination on 24 Feb. However, 1st Brigade operated on 1 Feb with four maneuver Bns, but on 24 Feb it ended operations with one maneuver Bn. The 1st Brigade also began participating in Op SARATOGA on 17 Feb and was committed to both ops **concurrently** until 24 Feb. 3rd Brigade terminated YELLOWSTONE and initiated Op CAMDEN at 18 December, 1967. 3rd Bde terminated CAMDEN and re-entered YELLOWSTONE on 27 Dec 67.

\* \* \* \* \*

*10 December 67: **LTC Avery S. Fullerton** assumed command of **4th Bn, 23rd Inf**; **LTC Thomas A. Ware** left it and was appointed XO 3rd Brigade, US 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Div.*

**Tomahawks Killed in Action trough this latter period of 1967 not associated in the records to a particular incident or operation were:**

**Raymond Perez, HHC, 24 November**  
**Stephen W. Pickett , Charlie Co.,14 December**  
**Elijah Waters, Charlie Co, 14 December**  
**James M. Clemons, Bravo Co, 23 December**  
**Scott H. Cook, Alpha Co. 30 December**  
**Richard G. Godbout, Alpha Co, 30 December**  
**William C. Marckle, Jr, Alpha Co, 30 December**  
**Wylie O. Phillips, AlphaCo, 30 December**

\* \* \* \* \*

*From emails:*



Jan 3, 05

Yeah Greg, that's it. Help me out with the rest if you can.

1st plt Larry Ewing

2nd plt ? McClure then Charles Keller KIA 1st or 2nd day then McClure again.

3rd plt ? Miller then you till you was WIA & evacuate then Miller again

A51 Myself, Richard ( Frenchie ) Godbout, (driver) Michael Nelms  
(Mick)(Mech.&M60)

Pete Alexander,( Sr Mech) Doc Orso ( Sr Medic) Till deros then Doc  
Hall.

A52 ? Lanier ( Sr Mech ) John Norship ( Mech/Welder) Charles ( Chuck)  
Keller

( Mech) till assigned 2nd Plt.

Do you remember the little red headed guy's name that was our tunnel rat? Do you have any info on the date & so forth that Keller was KIA? I need it so Rick can put him on the Memorial site. There's a good pic of him on Pete's site standing in front of his VTR back at Chu Chi.

Who else am I missing here?

Mick called me while I was posting this, He's going thru his slides to get them on c.d.'s & will send me a copy & I'll forward to you, Pete & Rick. He sure was glad to hear from us but says he's not fooling with no d@#\* computer. LOL , I said the same thing 2 mos. ago.

Thanks for your help & take care Brother

Roy A51

May 1, 06

Jim, Not sure but I think Cpt. B. had took over Alpha when that happened. When we pulled into that area all the Plt Sgt's had gathered over at my track for a cup of coffee while we waited for 6 to call us over for a meeting. It had just got dark when he called us & I guess Charlie didn't see us leave, he aimed that thing right between 2 tracks on the perimeter dead at my track. Doc Orso, Mick Nelms & Richard Godbout was on the other side when they blew it & a piece hit a center guide & went up & hit Doc in the back. He was one of the older hardcore boat guys though & said a band aid would fix it. The concussion from it blew the swim board off Fred's track but no one got hit. If you'll remember, the grass was about waist high so it wasn't hard for them to sneak up & set it up, or it may have already been in place. It cut a big fan shaped swath thru the grass & my track was right in the middle of it about 30 yds in. What if the whole thing had went off? that woulda been a helluva big bang. After that I was leery about putting all those antenna's back on, but I needed them. Neil, wasn't you in 1st Plt. then?

Roy A 51

May 5, 2012

I knew Massey well. Just talked to him. He was a track/gun TC in one of the 4.2 mortar tracks. I commanded the 4.2 FDC (Fire Direction Control) command track. I arrive in county in June '67 and left June '68. The flash incident occurred about 30 feet from me.

*We always had the mounted 4.2 tubes in our tracks. There was an FDC bunker in Cu Chi that would have suggested the supported the perimeter a few years earlier.*

*We usually bivouacked with Recon Platoon or whatever line company we were supporting in the field. Contrary to what someone else posted we never had an issue of the gun playing havoc with the floor of the tracks. In my entire year in country we only had one flash incident in the 4.2 platoon. By count we had 2 KIA's. One to the flash burn and one driver due to a mine.*

*their new basketball practice arena after him a couple of years ago.*

*Terry Potter Sgt E5*

\* \* \* \* \*

Notes from Report For Quarter Ending 31 Jan 68 [In retrospect – ed.] : The tactics employed by the VC during the first two months of the period [November- December 1967] were devised to delay the US sweep and clearing ops. Tactics during Jan were employed to comple-ment the Winter-Spring Campaign. The large number of attacks by fire are believed to have been to cover the movement of VC forces to the SAIGON area and to cause as many casualties and as much damage as possible. By creating a threat on Base Camps, the VC hoped to restrict allied reinforcing capabilities to the populated areas and political installations where their man ground efforts were directed.

Historical Reflections 1977 From US. Army In A Global Era. Ch 11 “US Army In Vietnam” By the end of 1967 the United States had been involved in military operations in Vietnam for over seven years and in major ground combat for two-and-a-half years. In-country U.S. military strength had risen to 485,000, and General William C. Westmoreland had been using his troops aggressively in all parts of South Vietnam to pursue the enemy’s main forces and to help shield the population from enemy attack. U.S. and allied forces had conducted hundreds of operations both large and small, and some forty of that number had each achieved a verified body count of 500 or more enemy soldiers.

According to MACV estimates, 81,000 Communist soldiers had been killed in 1967, giving substance to Westmoreland’s belief that the allies were slowly winning the war in Vietnam.

\* \* \* \* \*

From 1967 Command History, Volume I, released 16 September 1968

MACV enunciated the Concept of Operations for late 1967 into early 1968: “As the containment forces prevent major incursions of the enemy from out-of-country sanctuaries, the priority of [US] offensive operations will shift . . . to the southern portions of II CTZ, all of III CTZ, and IV CTZ . . . A series of offensives will be conducted in selected areas [SARATOGA, BARKING SANDS, AND YELLOWSTONE as examples] . . .

\* \* \* \* \*

Same source continued:

"The overall strategy will contain three basic facets, (1) offensives to keep the enemy off balance, (2) persistent of enemy base areas . . . , and (3) improved and expanded territorial security and other pacification programs . . .

"Pressure will be applied on all segments of the enemy's external and internal support system to reduce the combat effectiveness of his organized forces, and to keep him on the move and away from populated areas. Multi-brigade offensives will be launched against the major base areas . . . "

\* \* \* \* \*

From Special National Intelligence Estimate No. 14-67, `3 November 1967, "Capabilities of the Vietnamese Communists for Fighting in South Vietnam. "

Conclusion G

"Communist strategy is to sustain prolonged war of attrition and to persuade The US that it must pull out or settle on Hanoi's terms. Our judgment is that the Communists will retain adequate capabilities to support this strategy for at least another year. Whether of not Hanoi does persist in this strategy depends not only on its capabilities" . . . but also on other factors not treated in this estimate.

\* \* \* \* \*

From The Petagon Papers - What Washington Was Thinking

July 7 Draft Presidential Memorandum on Bombing - "With respect to additional pressure on the North, it is becoming apparent that Hanoi may already written off all assets and lives that might be destroyed bu US military actions short of occupation or annihilation. They can and will hold out as long as a prospect of winning a "war of attrition" in the South exists.." (p.55)

\* \* \* \* \*

Summing **1967** in his Report On The War In Vietnam (As Of June 1968), General Westmoreland states, "We now know the enemy explained to his troops and cadres that the time had come for an herculean offensive effort and a general uprising. He probably had many things in mind -- not the lest of which was to do something to reverse his fortunes. He surely hoped that the dramatic change in strategy would have on the United States similar to that which the battle of Dien Bien Phu had on the government .and people of France. (p. 136)

And on p. 157, the first page in "The Year Of Decision -- 1968. the first sentence reads, "In 1968 the War in Vietnam reached the decisive stage,' (emphasis added)

## 1968 THE HOT WAR

On 1 January, 1968 the US had 488,568 military in-country. MACV had begun noticing that, thru November/ December 1967, into January, 1968, more enemy units were making their way from sanctuaries toward population centers, resulting in an increased tempo and many cases of stiffened contact. Intelligence had predicted an increase of offensive activity toward late January, but were unsure where it would occur. It was also suspiciously heavy around the Marine Corps Base at Khe Sanh in I Corps. Besides, that amount of offensive capability was puzzling given the beating the enemy had taken throughout 1967.

The beginning of 1968 saw the 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division pursuing larger scale ops against larger enemy formation in the build-up to the what became the "Tet Offensive." The goal was to clear to the greatest extent possible III CTZ of enemy formations, arms caches, and supply caches and keep him off balance as he sought to move forces closer to Saigon (Capital Military District, or CMD). The United States had been involved in military operations in Vietnam for over seven years and in major ground combat for two-and-a-half years. In-country U.S. military strength had risen to 485,000, and General William C. Westmoreland had been using his troops aggressively in all parts of South Vietnam to pursue the enemy's main forces and to help shield the population from enemy attack. U.S. and allied forces had conducted hundreds of operations both large and small, and some forty of that number had each achieved a verified body count of 500 or more enemy soldiers. According to MACV estimates, 81,000 Communist soldiers had been killed in 1967, giving substance to Westmoreland's belief that the allies were slowing winning the war in Vietnam.

25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division - through the allied DRY SEASON CAMPAIGN 67-68, and TET OFFENSIVE's onset, the 25th Infantry Division had taken part in five major operations, (Battalion-size or larger), and 530 small unit actions from 1 February to 30 April 68. The major ops were YELLOWSTONE, SARATOGA, QUYET THANG, WILDERNESS and TOAN THANG. All the major, and 49 of the smaller actions resulted in enemy contact. Elements of 25th Infantry Division were in enemy contact every day of this period. In general, the operations between 1 February and 10 March were counter-offensives responding to the enemy TET Offensive. Those between 11 March - 22 April coordinated US/GVN search and destroy operations. After 22 April and thru May they were pre-emptive of an expected second attack on Saigon involving the Training and Rear Service Regt, and some of the 83rd RSR.

Enemy -- Local force units were thought to be dispersed down to platoon level in order to avoid contact, while conducting limited attacks against RF-PF outposts, and conducting re-supply and propaganda activities. D-14 was known to be under-strength following attacks on TAY NINH City during mid-February. They were thought to be somewhere east of TAY NINH. C-40 Local Force Co was located in STRAIGHT EDGE WOODS and generally ran platoon sized ops south southwest of TAY NINH City. There had been no recent contact with this unit. In the MICHELIN PLANTATION the C-64 Local Force Co with several guerilla units had been

conducting usual propaganda and harassing activities. Little was known of the 680th Regt except that it generally operated along the CAMBODIAN Border. The 83rd Rear Service Group was located in the TRAPEZOID [an area in Tay Ninh Province – ed.] conducting re-supply and administrative activities. Special Agent reports indicated the bulk of activity in the AO was centered in north TRAPEZOID (83rd Rear Service) and north of KATUM on re-supply routes coming east from CAMBODIA on the ORIENTAL RIVER and through STRAIGHT EDGE, and north from CAMBODIA through BO TUC toward the SAIGON RIVER. Assignments of US Brigade and Task Forces were changed from operation to operation, and over time, within operation, so a clear chronology of events BY UNIT BY DATE is difficult to reconstruct. A given unit is mentioned simultaneously in several operation & brigade reports for any given period/date . [Please bear with us – ed.]

Vegetation over the area varied from triple canopy to large areas of open rice paddies. The terrain was generally flat and the central and southern parts of the AO were well populated. Major rivers in the area were the SAIGON and ORIENTAL. Weather did not hamper friendly troop movements. Roads were in good condition and were used for re-supply and movement of infantry/artillery, and mechanized infantry.

Overall evaluation of the intel from ARVN HQs and other local sources is considered B-3 (usually reliable, possibly true). On several occasions US troops responded to local agent reports with good results. Overall operational security was considered good.

**Tomahawks Killed in Action trough during January, 1968 were:**

**Douglas G. Jensen, Bravo Co, 17 January**  
**Kerry M. Bukajisky, Charlie Co, 19, January**  
**George H. Nunez, Charlie Co, 19 January**  
**Glen R. Barnhill, Charlie Co, 21 January**  
**Paul R. Combs, Alpha Co, 21 January**  
**Seaborn D. Jones, Alpha Co, 21 January**  
**George M. Moore, HHC, 23 January**  
**Bobby L. Ditzfeld, Charlie Co, 24 January**  
**Peter L. Lovett, Alpha Co, 24 January [database notes “Op Yellowstone”]**  
**Ronald L. Galante, Charlie Co, 24 January**  
**William L. Marlin Jr, Charlie Co, 24 January**  
**James Miller, Bravo Co, 24 January**  
**Gary L. Nordquist, Bravo Co, 24 January**  
**Jesse V. Avila, Charlie Co, 25 January**

From early Quarterly Summary: By November 1967 the ops of II FFORCEV and ARVN III Corps within III CTZ had succeeded in driving the bulk of the VC/NVA main forces away from the more heavily populated areas into more sparsely settled border regions. A captured document showed that VC in MRIV - the region around Saigon - had suffered three times the losses in 1967 as in 1966. The threat in Gia Dinh

Province surrounding Saigon was reduced to the point that 199th Light Infantry Brigade was able to phase out Op FAIRFAX, and to move into War Zone D, leaving to 5th ARVN Ranger Group primary tactical responsibility for security of the Capital Military District (CMD.) The VC were in serious straits in Phouc Tuy and Long Khanh Province where allied pressure had broken down their supply system. The VC in western Hau Nghia Province had been reduced to the point that the 25th US Infantry Division was able to shift its brigades to operations northwest of Cu Chi; while 25th ARVN Division continued pacifying Hau Nghia Prov. US 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division had been successful in opening and holding open Highway 13 to Quan Loi, splitting War Zone C from D, as well as facilitating north-south military civil and movement north of Saigon.

The US 9th Infantry Division had begun clearing Highway 1 from Saigon to the II-III Vietnamese Corps boundary, turning it over to the 18th ARVN Division. US 9th Infantry Division drew down forces in the northeast part of its TAOI while concentrating on expanding Mobile Riverine Force ops in IV CTZ in the Delta.

The Revolutionary Development program was accelerating with public administration training in all Provinces, and economic activity was improving, partly as a result of the opening of many roads. While VC terrorism was rising, perhaps from desperation, there was evidence that this was occurring because the VC political infrastructure was losing its influence over key sectors of the population.

In November 1967 there had occurred a series of enemy initiated battles in Phouc Long and Binh Long Provinces. VC/NVA launched strong attacks against Song Be, Loc Ninh, Bu Dop and Bo Duc. During the course of these battles it was found that 21 of the 54 main and local force VC/NVA Bns in III CTZ were concentrated in northern border regions. It appeared that the enemy in III CTZ had decided to use most of his main force units along the Cambodian border and, in particular, to strengthen and consolidate his hold over Military Region 10 (Bin Long, Phouc Long and Quang Duc Provinces). While intel indicated that the enemy was preparing for a major dry season effort, it appeared that he was probably going to launch attacks after a TET truce during which he would massively resupply and reinforce across RVN borders.

II FFV [Lt Gen Fred Weyand] adopted in early December a border strategy and deployment posture to destroy his main force units, and to frustrate any large scale TET truce infiltration from Cambodia. The planned II FFORCEV posture stemmed from a COMUSMACV strategy that had three basic features. 1) the undertaking of several offensive ops in the border areas: a divisional sized op: SAN ANGELO in Phouc Long Province; a two Bde operation - YELLOWSTONE - in War Zone C, and an ACG [armored cavalry group? - ed] in Operation FARGO, in Binh Long Province. These three operations would have committed 22 of 53 US maneuver battalions available to II Field Forces along the northern edge of its AO.

2.) It was planned to achieve a border-sealing TET posture in which Battalion Task Forces would block main VC infiltration routes during the TET truce.

3.) By mutual US/RVNAF agreement, there would be a continuing shift of responsibility for security of the area around Saigon and the allied base from US to RVN forces.

It can be seen that, had II FFORCEV fully pursued this strategy, the bulk of its forces (39 battalions) would have been deployed outside the core allied base area and up to 150 km from Saigon. At that distance timely redeployment would have required fixed wing aircraft (C-123s and 130s) which must land on secure airfields. Only 14 maneuver Bns would have been available in this base area for quick redeployment and reaction to threats.

The general deployment of the ARVN III Corps battalions was not expected to change as radically. On 10 December there were 22 Bns inside the base area and 25 outside. 18th ARVN Division was disposed east along Highway I, which had been opened for traffic from Saigon to the III Corps boundary since late December. It would continue to provide route security. The 5th ARVN Division had 15 battalions deployed in western Hau Nghia Province and in Long An Province in position to intercept VC movements from the Parrots Beak area approx 40 km west of Bao Trai. Inside the CMD the 5th Ranger Group with 3 Bns provided the area security, backing up the other type RVNAF Bns (3 RF, 2 SVC, 2 MP) which secured Saigon proper.

Sixteen ARVN battalions would remain committed to the security of RDP (Rural Development Program) areas.

II FFORCEV did not execute the 10 December strategy once evidence began to amass that VC had changed their strategy and were going to aim their main force offensive at the populated areas of III CTZ which was largely covered by ARVN at that point. There were other indicators also.

a) There were several significant battalion-sized attacks against district and province capitals such as Bao Trai and Trang Bang in Hau Nghia Province, and Tan Uyen in Bien Hoa Province. These attacks broke the pattern of earlier enemy ops and signaled a change in objective of VC forces and the size of forces he would use in the attacks. Plans for attacks on other district and province capitals were discovered. These included attacks on Dau Tieng, Phu Loi, Lai Khe, My Tho, Ben Cat, Cu Chi and Tay Ninh.

b.) The VC reorganized the old MR 4 area around Saigon into five new sub-regions directly under COSVN control. These regions, radiating from Gia Dinh were designed to facilitate operations around Saigon.

c.) VC forces throughout III CTZ were being re-equipped with AK47s, heavy machine guns, and RPG-2 and 7s.

d.) NVA fillers were being infused into local force battalions.

e) There were persistent reports of a major offensive being planned. While these indicators lent weight to the assessment that the VC were going to launch a major offensive, and the objective would be in the populated areas, as yet in early January it was not concluded that the attacks would occur during, and in violation of, the TET truce, or that the main objective would be Saigon itself. Nevertheless, CG II FFORCEV throughout January gradually shifted the center of gravity of his forces to meet the changed threat.

On 10 January COMUSMACV approved abandoning the original TET posture. Only 22 Battalions remained outside the base area while 27 were inside, within assault helicopter reinforcing distance of any point. Four Battalions had been deployed north to I CTZ at MACV's direction. Only one Bde of 101st Airborne Division was deployed into the SAN ANGELO operation rather than the entire division. One brigade was diverted into AO MANCHESTER in War Zone D releasing 199th Lt Inf Bde for security ops in AO UNIONTOWN around Bien Hoa/Long Binh. One Brigade of US 101st Arbn Division undertook operations in AO NORMANDY in the FILHOL Plantation area north of Cu Chi just before its scheduled redeployment to I CTZ.

One 25th Inf Division brigade was pulled out of the YELLOWSTONE operational area in War Zone C to operate closer to Dau Tieng, while another Brigade shifted from north of Highway 1 to western Hau Nghia Province.

**Operation FARGO** ended in west Tay Ninh Province and only one Squadron remained at Loc Ninh while the Regt (-), together with elements of 101st Abn Division and 1st Division conducted a series of 3 leap-frogging operations north to south called ATTALA, ARAB, and ASPEN, targeted against the suspected locations of the 165, 88 and 101 NVA Regiments.

The 1st Australian Task Force (1 ATF) began its 1st operation outside Phouc Tuy Province when 2 of its 3 battalions ran operation COBURG in AO COLUMBUS against suspected locations of the 274th, 275th VC Regiments and the 5th VC Division. During this same period there were no major shifts in ARVN forces. However, ARVN III Corps shifted three Bns just before TET. 3/9th Inf Bn was moved from Song Be to Phu Van, vicinity of the 5th ARVN Division HQs; the 1/52 Inf was moved from its deployment on Highway 1 to Gia Ray; and the 52d Ranger Battalion was moved to vicinity of Xuan Loc from Ham Tan.

Men absent from units for the TET truce had lowered ARVN strength on 29 January to about 50% of their authorized 41,952 men. Although the TET truce was cancelled at 0945 on 30 January, the inadequate GVN communication system precluded notification of the bulk of these troops, and the strength of the 46 ARVN Bns was still at about 50% when VC attacks were launched on 31 January.

The RF/PF in III CTZ were at approx 70% of duty strength on 30 January, largely because individuals in the units live close to their outposts.

Resuming the narrative, one significant early contact was the **BATTLE OF SOUI CUT – FSB BURT**. On the night of 1-2 January 1968, 2/22 Infantry (M), 3/22 Infantry, and the 2/77 Arillery received a massive human wave attack by four battalions of NVA and VC at FSB Burt. Throughout the night, 22nd Inf, supported by arty and helicopters from 187th and 188th Assault Helicopter Co's fought back a determined enemy assault. When the firing stopped between 0530 and 0600 the next morning, The Americans were victorious in repulsing the attack. Over 401 NVA and VC were killed with American losses at 23 killed and 153 wounded.

Though thoroughly whipped, the enemy was not finished. In the jungle north of Tay Ninh, 4/9th Infantry killed 70 VC as they overran and destroyed several enemy base camps.



Back at FSB Burt, 3/22nd Inf "Regulars" found an ammo cache 1500 meters from the perimeter of 156 rounds 60mm mortar, 13,000 rounds AK-47 ammo, 41 cases of TNT, 24 cases of C-4 [explosive] and 14,000 blasting caps. 2/12th Infantry found 231 tons of rice cache 4 km from the Cambodian border in Tay Ninh Province. The biggest find came from a tunnel that yielded 220 rounds of 82mm mortar, 75 fuses, 101 75mm recoilless and 11,000 small arms rounds.

On 10 January 1968, the VC 7th Cu Chi Battalion, then nearly half NVA, launched a human wave assault on the night position of the 1/27th Infantry. It cost them 108 dead.

In the middle of January, the **4 Bn /23rd Infantry (Mech)** came upon an unknown number of entrenched VC in the lower Ho Bo Woods. In a two day operation, 49 VC were killed. By the end of SARATOGA, 1/8th Artillery had had fired or directed almost 110 thousand rounds of supporting artillery.

\* \* \* \* \*

Extract from an already heavily redacted Westmoreland "Eyes Only" cable from Jan. 22, 1968: 1. The following is my assessment . . . 2. The initial attacks in northern I Corps began on 20-21 January . . . and were repulsed, 3. These actions were probably preliminary to a full-scale attack on Khe Sanh . . . 6. The two week lull . . . that was interrupted . . . indicates preparations for a widespread effort . . . In III Corps he will probably attack province towns . . . Terrorism will probably increase in Saigon. [Ed attempted to retain tone and assesmaent, while shortening it to pertinent 25<sup>th</sup> Inf Div AO and expectations. - ed]

### **New Campaign: Tet Counteroffensive 30 January – 30 March, 1968**

**FIRST TET OFFENSIVE** (31 January – 16 February 1968), also known within VC/NVA history and doctrine as the attempted "General Offensive - General Uprising," began during the Lunar New Year "cease fire" (three days of Tet). The VC/NVA broke the truce and launched an all-out offensive up and down the country with approx 85,000 troops, a strategic decision made by the NVN government. A larger-scale allied counter-offensive, Operation QUYET THANG (Resolve to Win,) was launched against it.

Saigon and Tan Son Nhut were its main focal points for the enemy in III Corps area, but Province capitals and bases (hundreds of targets) were also struck. In the 25th Division's first major action, 3/4 Cavalry sped down Highway 1 to Tan Son Nhut Air Base which was under heavy attack. In brutal fighting, the Cavalry, aided by air strikes and artillery, drove the enemy away from the base. More than 300 enemy were KIA (BC).

Still in the Hobo Woods, the "Tomahawks" were pulled out from time to time and dispatched to critical points. 3rd Brigade was posted to HOC MON area to block VC

movement and keep it open for civilians and Allies. Action flared up early afternoon of 9 February when 2/27<sup>th</sup> Inf were hit by an est VC Bn. The firefight claimed 102 enemy KIA. At about same time next day, two Cos of 1/27<sup>th</sup> Inf and a Troop of 3/4<sup>th</sup> Cav came under fire from an unknown size VC force. The US force accounted for 105 VC KIA. This added to their previous morning's effort when they killed 176 NLFs. The 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalions 27<sup>th</sup> Inf found more of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Go Mon Bn NVA in camps on the west bank of SAIGON RIVER near Trung An and killed 89. After 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade dominance was asserted action tapered off to harassing fire and skirmishing. 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade killed 768 before the enemy fled. Still on 9 Feb, 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade was drawn into the fight near Hoc Mon as the enemy approached Saigon. There the 2/12<sup>th</sup> Inf killed 22 VC in a sharp fight. Same day 3/22<sup>nd</sup> Infantry killed 30 near Ap Cho. The 3/22<sup>d</sup> also had a 10-day battle to prevent Charlie ["Victor Charlie" = VC = NLF/NVA forces] from cutting Hiway 1. 3/22<sup>d</sup> Inf (Mech) won, and cost the enemy another 219 KIA. Contact continued almost daily with well-armed and disciplined VC and NVA.

When the Tet offensive ended, 25<sup>th</sup> Division troops had claimed more than 3,000 enemy KIA, captured a quarter million rounds of small arms ammo, identified enemy tunnel complexes and destroyed much of his combat power. A new enemy, the NVA, had appeared, and the 25<sup>th</sup> infantry Division prevailed.

Info From Official Records : MISSION: III ARVN Corps and II Field Force Vietnam units conduct offensive operations during 31 January-18 February 1968 to defeat VC/NVA forces who initiated TET OFFENSIVE in III CTZ.

\* \* \* \* \*

**FROM CMDR FFV II AFTER ACTION REPORT:** [Ed – will rely on abbreviations]

c. Actions during 29 Jan - 5 Feb:

In the 48 hours before the main VC attacks in III CTZ, events moved swiftly. Intel indicators of imminent attack multiplied and both ARVN and US forces made precautionary adjustments. II FFORCEV Cmdr Lt Gen Weyand] sent out a Flash message to all OPCON units at 291615 Jan stating the VC could be expected to violate the TET truce and all units to be prepared for the contingency.

The night of 29-30 Jan, heavy attacks occurred in I CTZ, causing GVN to cancel the TET truce the morning of 30 January. III Corps and II FFORCEV immediately resumed offensive ops. The only significant contact on the 30<sup>th</sup> was the sighting at 1100 by a 25<sup>th</sup> ARVN Division FAC of a convoy of 25 oxcarts and 200 VC south of Tay Ninh at XT29Q300. TAC Air and a light fire team killed 40 VC and destroyed 8 oxcarts.

18<sup>th</sup> ARVN Division moved two Bns to Xuan Loc as a reaction force - the 52<sup>d</sup> Ranger Battalion from Ham Tan, Phouc Tuy Province, and the 1/52 Inf Bn from its Highway 1 security mission in Binh Tuy Province.

5<sup>th</sup> ARVN Division redeployed 3/9 Inf Bn from Song Be vic of 5<sup>th</sup> ARVN Division HQs in Binh Duong Prov.

III Corps also directed that the C/O, CMD [Capitol Military District] request OPCON 1<sup>st</sup> Airborne Bn from JGS [ARVN Joint General Staff – ed.] on 30 Jan, which was done. The ARVN 1<sup>st</sup> Abn Bn was deployed in Saigon as CMD reserve

with one Co dispatched to the National Broadcasting Station and one to Chi Hoa Prison.

Ton Son Nhut Sensitive Area conducted a rehearsal of its US-ARVN base counterattack plan, and on 30 Jan went on red alert at 1745 hours along with Bien Hoa Airbase.

At 2125 hours the 86th RF Bn captured a prisoner in the CMD who quickly admitted that Tan Son Nhut and the broadcasting station were to be attacked that night, that tanks would be used, and that the VC were dressed like ARVN soldiers. Based on this information, the CMD alerted all units at 2200 hours and red alert status was in effect.

#### ENEMY PLAN AND STRENGTH

Tactical targets of military significance were to be airfields, rear service bases such as Long Binh Post, lines of communication to include docks and shipping facilities, and cities; targets whose existence are essential to the conduct of the war as well as the government and targets which, by their nature, are difficult to secure and defend. The operational plan for the VC/NVA in III CTZ appears to have included efforts to:

(1) Move to areas along the Cambodian border where training and resupply could be accomplished in established base camps closer to sources of supply and the safe border of Cambodia.

(2) Attempt to draw US forces from central and south III CTZ toward the Cambodian border where they would be fixed . . .

(3) Concurrently, to infiltrate replacements and new equipment to the main and local force units which would conduct the main attacks.

(4) Launch simultaneous attacks against the selected objectives with main and local force units which would conduct the main attacks.

(5) Launch simultaneous attacks against the selected objectives with main and local force Bns while the Regts blocked Allied reaction with the exception of the 5 VC Div, which has the mission of attacking the Bien Hoa/Long Binh Complex.

The VC were counting heavily on the fact that ARVN units would be at reduced strength during TET. Their operational plan was apparently as indicated on map 4. [omitted] 274th and 275th VC Regts supported by combined Artillery Group, U-1 Local Force Bn, and other local force elements had the mission to seize and hold the Bien Hoa/Long Binh complex. Key targets were Bien Hoa AB; HQ, II FFV; HQ, III Corps; the PW camp, and destruction of the ammo storage area.

(a) 271st Regt: Attack selected targets in the Hoc Mon area; block allied reaction by interdicting Route 1; be ready to reinforce and exploit success in the N Saigon area.

(b) 272d Regt: Block reaction of the US 25th Inf Division from the Cu Chi-Dau Tieng area; be ready to reinforce to the NW of Saigon.

(c) 273d Regt: District and RVN installations in Thu Duc HQ, block reinforcements from Bien Hoa; blow the Newport bridge at Binh Loi.

(d) 165th NVA Regt: Contain 1st Inf Division in vic Lai Khe; interdict Highway 13.

(e) 141st NVA Regt: Interdiction of Hwy 13 vic An Loc.

(f) 101st NVA Regt: Secure the area north of Saigon in vicinity of Go Vap.

(2) Dong Nai Regt: Given Bn Missions, 1 Bn to seize and hold Tan Uyen, other elements participated in attack on Phu Loi - Phu Cuong, supported by Phu Loi 1 Bn. #d Bn, attack Tan An.

(3) 88th NVA Regt: Block Hwy 13 vic An Loc.

(4) In the Saigon - Cholon - Tan Son Nhut area the attacks were conducted by the 1st, 3d, 4th, 5th and 6th Local Force Bns, the 2d Independent Bn, 267, 269, and 506 Local Forces Bns and the C-20 Sapper Bn. Their missions were: To seize and hold TSN AB and possibly the adjacent Vice-Presidential Palace, to seize and hold the Presidential Palace, to seize US and Philippine Embassy's, to seize and hold or destroy selected objectives such as National Police Stations, power points, and other GVN installations. The primary purpose was to disrupt the GVN and the city of Saigon as much as possible, to cause the GVN and US government to "lose face", and to force the GVN to the conference table with the NFL and/or NVN where they could negotiate from a position of strength. These units were to have been reinforced within 48 hours, according to prisoners.

(5) In Sub-Region E-1, 7th LF Bn: Seize and hold Cu Chi.

(6) Sub-Region E-2, 506th LF Bn: Seize and hold Duc Hoa, to include HQ 25th ARVN Division.

(7) Sub-Region E-3, local forces: Harass GVN installations by fire, assist in the passage of forces attacking Saigon, conduct harassing attacks by fire and provide security for C&C element conducting attack on Saigon.

(8) Sub-Region E-4, local force: Harass GVN installations by fire.

(9) B Bien Province, D445 LF Bn: Seize and hold Ba Ria. ["B Bien" in original. Unknown reference. -- ed]

(10) D440 LF Bn: Seize and hold Xuan Loc, 18th ARVN Division HQ.

(11) My Tho Province, 261, 263 MF Bns, 514th LF Bn: Seize and hold My Tho; 516 LF Bn: Seize and hold Ben Tre.

(12) Sub-Region E-5, Phu Loi I Bn: In conjunction with the Dong Nai Regt: Seize and hold Phu Loi - Phu Cuong.

(13) All of these actions were supported by local force units who probably had the mission of assisting the main attacks by providing guides and security forces, as well as conducting harassing attacks on either pre-planned targets or targets of opportunity.

(14) In War Zone C and MR 10, local forces supported by COSVN security units, rear service units, and artillery units were to pin down allied forces by conducting harassing attacks by fire against Allied Installations and FSPB's.

The techniques of VC/NVA infiltration of both supplies and forces bears mentioning. The buildup of weapons and ammunition caches in and around Saigon began as early as November. Caches were established for the purpose of:

- (1) Resupplying attacking local force units.
- (2) Arming recently recruited personnel.
- (3) Arming civilians who would rally to the VC cause during the expected "uprising".
- (4) Arm VC prisoners released from Chi Hoa Prison.

Heavier weapons and ammunition were generally infiltrated from Cambodia via the "Parrots Beak" (Ba Thu) area by sampan. Replacements and rockets came through the "saddle" area of Phouc Long Province, down routes east of Song Be, and through War Zone D. Another major route for supplies was the "Fishhook" area on the Tay Ninh - Binh Long Province boundary in War Zone C.

It is known that the VC made a study of commercial traffic into Saigon and based upon this knowledge weapons, ammunition and demolitions were smuggled into the city by vehicles representative of the prevailing traffic. For example along Highway 1, vegetable and produce carrying trucks were used and trucks normally carrying rubber and firewood used on Highway 13 . . .

The movement of enemy troops into Saigon was not "infiltration" in the accepted sense of the word, such as movement from North Vietnam to SVN down the Ho Chi Minh trail. The enemy Bns that participated in the attack on Saigon proper (exclusive of Tan Son Nhut Air Base) were the 1st through 6th Bns, inclusive, of old MR IV, all of which normally had operated in or on the periphery of the CMD. The VC in these Bns were familiar with Saigon and did not require any extensive network to assist their movement into the city. They were able to move about as ordinary citizens. For example the C10 Sapper Bn is a Saigon unit and several PWs from this unit revealed that they were taxi or Lambretta drivers and were intimately familiar with the city. The weapons for these units other than those carried were infiltrated under various covers and disguises. There are no documented cases of any mass movements into the city, such as bringing weapons in by ship.

When it is considered that the VC infiltrated Saigon, a city of 2,500,000, and suburbs of an additional 800,000, with 4,000 troops, the infiltration is placed in its proper perspective. Four thousand people moving in a city that size during the TET season, while nearly 20,000 ARVN soldiers were also home on TET leave, would be extremely difficult to detect.

The other battalions and regiments that took part in the offensive made normal tactical marches over established routes, through established base camps, and known base areas. These units were held in assembly areas at 9 to 12 hours marching distance from their targets. At the proper time they moved out to attempt to reach their targets for the coordinated assault. Several things served to cause a faulty execution of their plan. Guides and units got separated or lost, columns got intermixed forcing the commanders to either attempt unscrambling on the move or waste valuable time by halting and unscrambling. Another example was the failure of two VC Co's to rendezvous in the rubber plantation adjacent to the Bien Hoa POW camp because they became confused when they arrived and found no rubber trees. Some plows had cleared the area of vegetation one month earlier and the units overshot their mark and did not contribute to the unsuccessful attack on the camp. Some march tables were poorly calculated, so that a few units were in the wrong place at the wrong time and in the wrong formation. Other units attacked from a march column without deploying, while in still other cases units waited for following elements which never arrived.

At Long Binh [IIFV HQs, & logistic /admin center ed.] the perimeter bunkers were manned, and gunships were placed on strip alert.

d. **The Battle of Long Binh.** As early as 0035 hrs 31 January the first indications of a ground attack were realized as Co E [E in original – ed] , 4/12 Inf, 199th Lt Inf Bde detected and engaged a VC force north of Dong Nai River moving south toward Bien Hoa Airbase. Supported by artillery and air, they eventually killed 47. At about 0100H a LRRP [Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol] of 199th Bde also detected approx 90 VC who double-timed past their positions just north of Ho Nai Village near Long Binh. These contacts caused gunships on strip-alert to be ordered aloft. When 122mm rocket and mortar attacks came at 0300 these aircraft were able to quickly engage and disrupt several launching sites. In Long Binh, a heavy rocket and mortar barrage directed at 199th Bde HQs and II FFEV HQs started the attack. Light fire teams, pre-warned and aloft, and arty responded to rocket fire coming from east and north of the Dong Nai River. Several eastern positions were put out of action before they fired all their rounds.

At 0330 CG II FFORCEV ordered 2/47 Inf (M), 9th Inf Division north from its position on Route 15 near Bearcat to Long Binh. At 0430 two Bns of 27<sup>th</sup> VC Regt launched a ground attack through Ho Nai village south across Highway 1 to the north Long Binh perimeter. At the same time U-1 Local Force Bn harassed the east perimeter covering efforts by Sapper units to penetrate the main ammo dump. One company of 275th VC Regiment tried to seize the ARVN PW compound which contained approx 2000 PWs.

While fire was returned from the bunker line and APCs, other units of 199th Bde engaged VC throughout the area. By a series of platoon and company moves, they converged on 275 Regt under heavy fire, particularly from gunships of 3/17 Air Cav Sqdr. Enemy forces were unable to make headway in bamboo south of the PLANTATION and attacked the 12th Avn Grp runway without success.

Several teams entered the ammo dump and set timed charges. Many of these were removed by EOD teams before 4 of 100 pads of ammo detonated at 0800. 1st Plt, US B co, 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn, 47 Inf (M) with MP gun jeeps protected II FFORCEV HQs. They started a sweep thru WIDOW'S VILLAGE, across the road, and north of the H1, where they ran into strong resistance and lost one APC.

By 0600H, 199th Brigade, reinforced by units of 9th US Division and supported by fires of one troop 3/17th Air Cavalry, had encircled he bogged down assault elements of 275th Regt and were killing them at a sustained rate. At 0800, Co B/4/39 Inf made an assault into the grass helipad in a field opposite II FFV HQ. The LZ was hot; the unit quickly cleared the area and moved through Widows Village with a mechanized infantry unit, (Recon 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn, 47th Inf.) A company-size force from 199th Bde, together with ARVN MPs, repulsed the attack on the PW compound.

e. **The Battle of Bien Hoa.** At the same time BIEN HOA Airbase received about 25 rockets followed by mortars and ground attack. Two battalions of 274th VC Regt attacked from the east, while the 238th VC Local Force Co reinforced, attacked III Corps HQS. VC were initially engaged by the E bunker line manned by an RF Plt, and the MP Base reaction force. The VC breached the perimeter but did not get onto the airstrip. The 57th RF Bn, sent by the Dong Nai Sensitive Area Command,

reinforced defenders of the Air Base at 0420 and the VC were driven out of their penetration.

At 0820 the 2/506 US Airborne battalion was deployed by helicopter from AO MANCHESTER to 101st Airborne Division HQ at BIEN HOA Air Base and began an attack south once it was out through the east gate.

Alpha Troop 3/5 Cav 9th US Division, was ordered to reinforce III Corps HQS, & departed from BLACKHORSE, fought through the 275th Regt astride Highway 1 and plowed into the flank of 274th Regt attacking BIEN HOA Air Base, inflicting and suffering heavy losses. Air strikes, gunships and arty saturated the VC approach routes east of the airbase. Despite the heavy ground attack, air ops were not halted at BIEN HOA except between 0300 and 1300 on 31 Jan. By late afternoon 31 Jan, the immediate ground threat to Bien Hoa and the III Corps HQS had been eliminated. Several hundred VC were KIA. It would take three more days, and the concerted efforts of 199th Brigade (Light), elements of 101st Abn Division, 11th ACR, and 9th Infantry Division to drive out/destroy the remnants of the five VC Bns in the Bien Hoa/Long Binh area. The major ground attack from the 5th VC Div, however, was eliminated on the first day of the offensive.

f. **The Battle of Ton Son Nhut** began at 0321H when heavy fire was received all around the perimeter. The main attack by a 3-battalion force came from the west at Gate #51 while secondary attacks were aimed at east Gate #10 and North Gate #58. The VC force apparently attacked in a column of Bns, prepared to pour through a breach in the bunker line. The heavy weapons companies of each of these battalions were set up in the Vinatexco Textile Mill, a structure west of Gate #10. Anti-aircraft weapons were placed on the roof, and a cache of weapons assembled there to supply those recruits in the force that were not yet armed. The initial assault defeated several bunkers guarding Gate 51 and the leading battalion penetrated the defenses and got about 200 m. inside the wire in the direction of the main runway.

Forces from the 377th Security Police Squadron and a two-Plt USARV Task Force (TF35) and mixed ARVN elements executed their counter-attack in time to block the penetrating force. At approx 0430, two Co's from 8th ARVN Abn Bn counter-attacked the penetration, taking heavy casualties. The Tan Son Nhut Sensitive Area Cmdr and his advisor requested help from US forces. 3/4th Cav Sqdr of 25th Inf Division was committed from Cu Chi. The Sqdr was spread along Rte 1 from Hoc Mon bridge, 8 mi from Ton Son Nhut, to Go Dau Ha. Troop C, at the HOC MON BRIDGE responded first. It was guided cross country past potential blocking positions by the Sqdr C/O dropping flares from his C&C helo. The troop thus arrived before light at 0600, avoiding VC ambushes.

Troop C attacked the VC force from the northwest drawing heavy fire from the Textile Mill. It succeeded in cutting off the trailing VC Bns from the mill. It then engaged VC forces around Gate 51, losing over a third of its strength while destroying the capability of the VC to continue the attack. This was the decisive force, and action that defeated the main VC assault on Ton Son Nhut.

VNAF and USAF airstrikes were put on the Textile Mill in the morning and partly neutralized its fire. At 1219 a mixed US and ARVN force of 25 men from TSN under the command of US Army MSG Beaugardus counterattacked the depleted

VC's inside the base and overran them, closed the gate and ended the threat. The ARVN Commander, Deputy Cmdr, and US Deputy Senior Advisor were wounded.

At 1300 the remainder of the ¾ Cav Sqdr arrived at Gate 51 having completed neutralizing the Textile Mill, and engaging the disorganized VC forces. The threat was eliminated from the west. Over 500 VC dead were counted within the base and W of Gate 51. On the northern perimeter of TSN the 2d Svc Bn (ARVN) blocked the strong VC/NVA attack which had already swept through Go Vap.

Two VN Marine Bns were combat assaulted into the JGS HQs area that morning and one, the 4th VNMC Bn, counterattacked Go Vap from inside TSN. In Go Vap, the VC overran the Co Loa Artillery Camp capturing 12 105's. The breech blocks had been removed, however, so the weapons were inoperative. These guns were later recaptured intact. By 1000 hrs the Armored Cmd HQs was also penetrated. The VC were accompanied by NVA tank crews, expecting to capture, and use, tanks from the HQs, but all had been removed two months previously. The counterattack by the 4th VNMC Bn retook the Co Loa area by nightfall, having killed over 100 VC and sustaining losses of seven KIA and 52 WIA.

g. At **Phu Tho Race Track**, VC seized and tried to hold the race track for several reasons: (1) It was a good rallying point for VC unfamiliar with Saigon. (2) It was the center of a good road net. (3) It was within 82mm mortar range of TSN. A strong VC force converged and assembled at the track after over-running the police station there. A US MP Plt engaged them but was pinned down. One Co 3/7 Inf, reinforced with a Plt of D/17 Cav, drove from Binh Chanh by truck and counterattacked, linking up with the MP's. This force cleared the race track and by 1300H 3/7 Inf Bn was able to assault it.

33d VN Ranger Bn joined 3/7th Inf and commenced clearing the area. By nightfall a radius of 3 to 4 blocks was cleared. 6th VC Local Force Bn had the mission of seizing nearby Chi Hoa Prison and was the main enemy unit engaged. In the course of heavy fighting, the VC Bn was virtually destroyed without reaching its objective. The fighting around the track continued several days while VC continued to rally there. Every VC unit taking part in the attacks on Saigon were identified at the race track at some time.

The **US Embassy** was a main target. Elements from C10 Sapper Bn - whose members lived in Saigon itself - breached the wall with satchel charges and attacked the main building with RPG and AW fire. Marine guards defended from inside the building and were reinforced by MPs and a small Marine reaction force. One Plt from C/1/502 Airborne Bn was dispatched from Bien Hoa by helicopter and successfully landed on the roof pad at 0810 after having been driven off by fire at 0500. The grounds were secured by 0900. 19 VC were killed on the Embassy grounds.

Meanwhile at **CU CHI**, at 0110 hrs, the 7th VC LF Bn, reinforced, launched a ground and mortar attack on Cu Chi village. They penetrated the MACV compound and opened the jail. About 50% of the compound was burned. Local RF and PF units, supported by ARVN and US artillery, defended. At 0320 the US 25th Inf Division base camp just north of town received a heavy attack by fire. Ten rounds of 122mm rocket and 200 rds 82mm mortar fell, resulting in one KIA and 28 WIA. The



VC began to break contact at 0500. At 0530, D/3/22 Inf with **one Plt of 4/23rd Mech Inf** was engaged by VC blocking forces while moving south from the base camp to relieve the town. At 0730 the 2/49th ARVN Inf moving to the north toward Cu Chi engaged VC blocking forces. It was reinforced by ARVN 3/49th Inf and 1/10 Cav [ARVN]. Both US and ARVN units reached the center of town by 1030. VC forces withdrew at 1145 but contact continued by until 1830. There were 40 VC KIA in Cu Chi and 25 outside, 11 of them by artillery. Heavy civil damage was done to the center of Cu Chi.

Other places and towns attacked include: ARVN JGS HQs, Presidential Palace, the National Broadcasting Station studios, HOC MON and BINH CHAHN district HQs, BEN CAT, DUC HOA, BEN TRE, BA RIA, XUAN LOC, and BEN TRE -- among others.

When the "first" phase" Tet offensive ended, US 25<sup>th</sup> Division troops had claimed more than 3,000 enemy KIA, captured a quarter million rounds of small arms ammo, and identified / destroyed enemy tunnel complexes and much of his combat power. A new enemy, the NVA, had appeared, and the 25<sup>th</sup> prevailed.

### **SOME OBSERVATIONS REGARDING THIS PHASE OF THE TET CAMPAIGN**

The GENERAL OFFENSIVE failed to initiate the GENERAL UPRISING as NVA doctrine dictated. They had been unable to prevent Saigon from being reinforced and they never completely attained/held any of their military or civilian objectives. The VC/NVA TET offensive had aimed at no less an objective than winning the war with one stroke aimed at the heart of political and administrative power in SVN - Saigon. Its political impact is both harder to judge and beyond the scope of this report. But it must be concluded that whatever political gains were made were bought at an enormous cost to both VC and NVA in terms of trained men and organized units. It was a price which neither NVN nor the NLFA could afford for long. The damage done to US and ARVN forces was slight by comparison, and out of the battle the ARVN emerged with an unprecedented rise in self-confidence. The civil cost was considerable, but neither catastrophic, nor permanent. NLF claims that they represent the people were shown to be as false a hope as the popular uprising. The NVA/VC strength weakened throughout III CTZ, as it did so their "war of liberation" which increasingly must replace VC losses by outside infiltrators from the North and not by local NLF recruitment. This in turn has been reflected in the lesser guerrilla skills of green NVA units operating near unfamiliar populated areas, making their detection and defeat easier, and forcing them to rely more on outside support and better weapons to survive and operate. The effect of the TET offensive on the course of the war has yet to be determined but it is clear that it has brought the war closer to resolution whether by military or political action.

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Statistics from The Defense of Saigon. HQ PCAF, Tactical Evaluation, dated 14 December 68 – "III Corps as a whole, received sharply increased B52 sorties during the first half of 1968." For the period 1 Aug 67 thru 31 Dec 67, a total of 531

sorties struck 88 targets. For the period 1 Jan 68 thru 30 Jun 68, 1797 sorties struck 299 targets, a tripling of "Arc Lights."

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**COSVN** REPORT EXCERPT dated 1 Feb 68 - "We failed to seize a number of primary objectives and to completely destroy mobile and defensive units of the enemy. We also failed to hold the occupied areas. In the political field we failed to motivate the people and stage uprisings and break the enemy's oppressive control."

\* \* \* \* \*

**On 2 February, 1968, Delford B. Dunifer, noted assigned to B Co or Recon [ ? - ed.] was killed in action.**

On 3 February, 1968 **4<sup>th</sup> Bn (Mech) 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry** engaged enemy forces in Tan Phu Trung – Ap Cho area. **This day killed in action included: Leslie L. Cowden of HHC; and Leon Anderson Jr, Bruce E. Engstrom; Eugene E Korecki (Commanding); Howard Saddler Jr.; Dale Schmidt all of Bravo Co.** This is later referred to as the Battle of Ap Cho.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Jan 31, 08*

*Donn, -- I remember 3rd of Feb very well. I was with Charlie Co. and we were pulling security for the Rome plows when Capt. Connors radioed that Bravo was getting the s----- kicked out of it and we had to get over to your location. I can't remember how far away you were but before we could reach you we got hit in a u-shaped ambush. I will always remember him calling over to the command medic track and telling me that "I ain't going to be no Custer". He was conservative most engagements but not that day, the NVA were standing in the tree lines in their Khaki uniforms firing RPG's like crazy. We broke through the center and circled back around and opened fire. I've seen 4th of July displays that were calmer than that day. I believe we lost 5 or 6 men and a bunch wounded, but boy the NVA knew they has miscalculated what Connors was going to do. We had body count of over 30 and many more dragged away.*

*We finally reached you late in the afternoon but your damage had been done. It was the worst I had seen one of our companies hit. Capt. Korecki (sp) was dead and most of the medics wounded. My fellow sr. aid medic from Bravo, Frank Beavers had a look in his eyes that I will never forget. I made him sit down and drink a beer. He told me he had used every one of their pressure bandages from command medic track and all the morphine was gone. Frank was killed on the 14th of Feb at Ap Cho. I think Ap Cho was a more intense fight as it lasted for 3 solid days of trying to punch through that village. But Feb 3rd comes in a close 2nd. It's hard to believe that 40 years have passed. I wish it had never happened.*

*Doc John*

Jan 31, 08

*Doc, you are correct the bravo losses occurred so quickly that you couldn't ponder much, it was wham bam and what the hell is happening. but the Ap Cho/Tan Phu Trung village battles in mid February showed me what was really terrifying. it was the offensive line assault - over and over again. the mental challenge of going into a meat grinder time and time again. no matter what, after a while, paranoia sets in, and you can only hope your wound won't be catastrophic. after almost the whole squad was taken away to cu chi, you choose up who will drive, who will TC, and who was going to ride in the back hatch put the 50 ammo box up on top?? that was my dilemma on the 14th, I had to fire the 50 from underneath too much shit was pinging off of the cupola, I had wrapped a flak jacket around my legs inside while standing on 50 ammo boxes. KEEP up the 50 fire, it may stop an RPG from being fired at us. it was a nightmare battle that I was only too happy to leave on the night of the 14th on that glorious dust off.*

*Donn M*

\* \* \* \* \*

**OPERATION SARATOGA** (25 February – 10 March 1968) 25<sup>th</sup> Division [roughly 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade + 3/4<sup>th</sup> Cav] minus units in Operation YELLOWSTONE ran offensive operations in TAY NINH and BINH DUONG provinces to find and destroy enemy forces, provide engineer security, secure various FSBs, prevent rice taxation and transport, and react to VC initiatives. SARATOGA was restricted in December due to concurrent operations ATLANTA and CAMDEN, but proceeded fully in January. **4<sup>th</sup> Battalion 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry (Mechanized)** was assigned to 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade during Op SARATOGA up to about 8 February.

From Official Reports: MISSION: a.) Within capability, conduct offensive operations in TAY NINH and BINH DUONG provinces to locate and destroy enemy forces. b.) Provide engineer security for repair of MSR [Main Supply Route] between BAU CO and TAY NINH, TAY NINH and DAU TIENG, TAY NINH and GO DAU HA. c.) Secure FSB ST. BARBARA at BAU CO and the LOC between BAU CO and TAY NINH. d.) React to VC initiatives in TAOI.

Execution of SARATOGA underwent significant changes in the last half of January with the gradual buildup of NVA/VC forces in the three province area preparatory to TET Offensive. The operation took on an entirely different aspect with the launching of TET

Offensive on 30-31 January 68. Divisional assets committed to YELLOWSTONE were re-deployed to support SARATOGA. The 3rd Brigade began activities in SARATOGA on 6 February, dividing its reinforced assets between YELLOWSTONE and SARATOGA. On 16 February, the 3rd Bde ended its involvement in YELLOWSTONE to devote all its attention to SARATOGA. On 17 February, 1st Brigade joined SARATOGA, and on 24 February with the end of YELLOWSTONE, was committed entirely to SARATOGA. Except for elements detached to the Capital Military District, all division elements participated in SARATOGA until its termination 10 March.

The emphasis of SARATOGA between 25 February and 10 March was placed on counter attacking NVA/VC forces which had moved in force into built up and populated centers in HAU NGHIA, BINH DUONG, LONG and GIA DINH Provinces, defending allied base camps which had come under heavy attack, and mounting a counteroffensive to destroy NVA/VC forces and installations in the northern part of the TAOI. Concurrently with this phase of SARATOGA, divisional elements were sent into the to assist with the defense of Saigon, Tan Son Nhut Air Base, etc., and to clear enemy forces out of the SMD.

BDA: 189 bunkers destroyed and 23 damaged, 762 meters of trench destroyed, 1310 meters of trench uncovered, eight spider holes destroyed, 100 spider holes uncovered, 100 m. tunnel uncovered, one tunnel entrance found, three boxes supplies destroyed and three damaged, three automatic weapons destroyed, four enemy killed (BC).

Killed In Action on February 26, 1968 were Michael Cotton, HHC; Steven V. Goldstein, C Co; Gary K. Lanhom, HHC, and Joseph A Zuniga, C Co.

On February 28, the Tomahawks lost **KIA: Archie Anderson, B Co; Dennis P. Clancey, B Co; Robert W. Howden, HHC; Jerry D. Leak, B Co; and Walter C. Shellito, B Co.**

US 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division DIVARTY: Artillery moves excerpt: The remaining moves were accomplished without major incidents . . . One particularly dangerous spot was located along the road leading south from Cu Chi. The VC had constructed reinforced concrete bunkers near **Ap Cho** (XT7008) [4-digit] no more than 1000 meters from the road. They prevented free movement of convoys between Cu Chi and Saigon. After a number of unsuccessful attempts to soften with air strikes, indirect artillery fire and assault with infantry, the answer was found in the form of 8" howitzers firing assault fire on the bunkers. [Additional details included in the description of the battle at Ap Cho/Tan Phu Trung.]

\* \* \* \* \*

*June 12, 03 -- Your pictures brought back memories that I haven't thought of much for 35 years. I am one of the "silent minority" in the group. I was a senior medic with HHC and C Company from June 67-68. I remember the day the ammo dump went up. James was right that it occurred the opening night of the Tet Offensive. (name detached/not recorded)*

*Jan.31' 68.-- I was working in the Battalion aid station when we heard something go overhead that sounded like a freight train out of control. It landed in middle of division. I remember one medic saying, "That should wake the house cats up". It was a rocket that we had never experienced before. They shot 4 or 5 more during the night. Early next morning one came in and hit the ammo dump. All hell started breaking loose and we got the word to "get out of dodge". I hooked up with 3rd*

platoon and we beat feet it out beyond the perimeter. We ground mounted some 50's and fired all morning at God only knows what. The ammo dump was going off at such a rate that we didn't know what was outgoing or incoming. We swept the area that afternoon and found 3 NVA bodies. That was the beginning of months of hell to come. This is my first posting and hope to join in more. These 4 months of reading the chat has been a real sense of healing for me. Thanks,  
John W.

Jan 30, 08

Donnie McM US \*\*\*\*\* "slick sleeve".

My recollection of Bravo Co. during Tet.

I had just arrived in country on the 19<sup>th</sup> January and brought to Cu Chi in the back of a deuce and a half. I spent 5 days in the 25th's jungle training school and was helicoptered out to the Ho Bo woods.

On the 3rd of February, grid coordinates XT638218, we were going to practice wood line assaults (according to George Lovins ,in-country since December 67). We entered a clearing with left, center and right columns of tracks. I didn't know if this was our practice spot or on the way to it. All of a sudden explosions started going off all around us. being new and ignorant I began looking, up thinking we were being mortared, but someone on top with me yelled "ambush RPGs." The tracks scrambled to get out of that clearing, everybody on the tracks jumped off on the run (GOD , we had great legs ! ). Some of us in the center column had too far to run and didn't want to be run over by the fanning out tracks, so we stayed in the clearing and began a shootout with the tree line to the front. Being a scrawny kid I had pulled the pins on 2 hand grenades, I ran forward and with one bounce watched them go off in the tree line. This was not heroic, it was my first bit of combat stupidity.

Two of the tracks that made far forward to the left side tree line were soon racked by explosions and on fire. The right side had a gook cemetery which is where we ran to because the middle of the clearing was becoming impossible to stay at.

Lying on my stomach with the other guys putting out M-16 fire, I looked up and standing was an officer ( who I now know is Korecki) giving orders to redeploy further into and to the right in the cemetery. I was amazed that he was standing up while everybody was on their bellies.

Word was soon spread to "get the hell out of here" and everyone beat a very disorganized retreat back to where we entered that hellhole.

=====

**Bravo co. 5 KIAs:**

**Capt. Eugene Korecki**

**SP4 Bruce Engstrom**

**Pfc. Leon Anderson Jr.**

**Pfc. Howard Sadler**

**Pfc. Dale Schmidt**

**Hospitalized wounded 15**

**lt. Russ Walberg, returned to HHC mid-March**

**SSg. Charles Culbert , returned to Bravo mid-Feb**

**Sgt. Douglas Mc Naughton**  
**SP4. David Kissinger**  
**Sp4. Charles Mc Nair**  
**Sp4. Charles "Tex" Sabatier**  
**PFC Donald Bradberry**  
**Pfc. Edward d' Agostino returned to Bravo late Feb.**  
**Pfc. John Shea**  
**Pfc. Edgar Bishop**  
**Pfc. Mex Jasso**  
**Pfc. James Herns**  
**Pfc. Robert Long**  
**Pfc. Charles Patin, returned to HHC mid-March**  
**Pfc. Timothy Barrow**

*I did not name our medic casualties, John W knows who they are and they are not carried on Bravo's morning reports.*

*PFC Vernon Johns was the only missing tomahawk during Vietnam. He was not noticed missing till the 6th of February, his remains were found many years later ( 1979?), his death occurred during the ambush but he was much further into the brush to be found.*

*Back at Cu Chi, having survived my first combat uninjured, my Sgt., Roosevelt McGee, took me aside and told me that if he ever saw me running with the pin pulled out of a hand grenade, "he would shoot me in the back of the head" rather than let me kill someone with my dumb stunt. He is now an assistant Baptist pastor, who does not recall that statement - I did not forget it , we (Elsa and I ) treated him and his wife out to dinner. He ended his tour of Vietnam, seriously wounded on the 29th April.*

*In Cu Chi I was astonished to see a track with an entrance and exit RPG hole !!  
Donn M.*

*Mar 25, 08*

*Charles, yes I remember the ammo dump thing, I guess I was a bit unlucky with my time there. I was in base camp for only about 4. nights, we were in the field the rest of the time. I was in the EM club twice. Do you remember either thanksgiving or Christmas they brought out turkey mash potatoes gravy and corn, but it was raining so hard that when we got back to our tracks the paper plate had softened and everything went to liquid and ran off the plate. The turkey was good though with a beer chaser. Did you get into the roan plow duty of going around in circles all day?  
Country*

*Apr 1, 08*

*Sir, I want to personally thank you for making this list available to me. It has helped me "jog the old memory banks" once again . I seem to have forgotten some of the names of my platoon leaders that were with me in both B Co., as well as A Co. in 1967 and 1968. I am listed as Capt Donald I. Holland in B Co. in 1967. Served under LTC Ware and Maj Spurrier (XO) while in B Company.*

*Please note the correct name and spelling in the signature block, below, just for the record. Thanks again for the efforts and work you, and others, put in on this. I have one of my Lt's name missing from B Co., That's the one I keep trying to remember, he was kind of "special" to me (long story!). But as they say '... time and memory are two distinct different things'...*

*Don L. Holland*

*Apr 3, 08*

*Hello Lt Mellis -- How's the world been treating you? Do you remember the first nite of Tet when Recon headed toward the ARVN compound in Cu Chi that had a few NVA or VC in it. I believe your track might have taken an RPG the next morning. Farmer*

*April 3, 08*

*Jim, -- Absolutely correct, I recall those events often and present that Chu Chi ops as an example of using infantry and mech going into the teeth of an existing enemy attach upon a fixed site. As I recall we were moving from the RVN compound intersection out of town slowly when my track was hit by an RPG3.*

*That was the beginning of Recon's Tet operations, going into Ton Son Nhut US Air Force site to escort the first 200 resupply trucks for Cu Chi and Tay Ninh after Tet. I recall the Air Force Exchange officer opening the exchange for us the evening we settled in on Air Force property. There are a couple of side stories about our attempt to move down Hwy 1 to Saigon and being turned back, and my revised plan, and move again down Hwy 1.*

*Subsequent Recon participated on the assault operation at Ap Cho when Tomahawk relieved another Bde Bn. In that action Recon provided left flank security. You may recall a little demonstration we did for giggles. We moved in line up the left flank off about 300 or 400 yards and on my command we executed a right flank turn and moved toward the dug in positions and opened fire with our 50s. Of course we cut it off before we got to close to our assaulting Bn fire.*

*Later when the Battalion went to the Iron Triangle with the Rome plows, we, Recon, did our perimeter security missions. Then one day one of our Recon guys finds a tunnel entrance near the river. Our operation then became to further search out what we found and follow it to conclusion or until relieved. What turned out was we found the tunnel system around the Iron Triangle that caused devastation to the 1st Inf Division when they operated there. Also the Stars and Stripes ran a front page article about the event.*

*Our Platoon Sgt was my best advisor and that helped me throughout my stay with Recon and continued with me through my command of Charlie Company.*

*Years and age may cast shadows and/or redistribute our thoughts and memories somewhat, so my recollections appear accurate in my mind but I defer to you and others who experienced those events for adjustment.*

*Jerry M*

*Jul 15, 2011*

*THANKS NEIL, ANOTHER GREAT READ. IF THE WILLIE NELSON TUNE 'ON THE ROAD AGAIN' HAD BEEN AVAILABLE WE WOULD HAVE ALL BEEN*

CROONING IT. WE WERE SURE RUNNIN AROUND A LOT late summer. I WAS CHARLIE CO CDR FOR ONLY 58 DAYS STARTING ABOUT 8-9 FEB 68. Then AP CHO on 12th. EARLIER I GOT HELD UP AT TRAVIS AFB WHEN DOD STOPPED AIR TVL INTO OUTA SVN. THAT WAS A SPOOKY LANDING INTO BIEN HUA AB. CAPITAL A L WAS THE CHARTER AC. THEY TURNED OFF ALL INTER LITES ETC. HAD US PULL DOWN THE DINKY SLIDE CURTAIN AND WEEVED THEIR DECENT IN A DIVE ! TO GET SAFELY ON RUNWAY. THE ESCORT TRK AS BEST I COULD SEE WHEN WE TURNED TO GET TO THE GATEWAY, WAS USING NO USUAL BLINKING BRITE LITES BUT AN AIRMAN IN THE PU BED WITH TWO FLASHLITES. COOL BUT ALARMING FOR US PAX. GOT OFF RAPIDLY AND MET THE MOST JOYUS MEN AND WOMEN GOING HOME. WE MOUNT BUSSES AND HEAD FOR LBJ REPO DEPOT. NO WEAPONS EXCEPT FOR A 101 ABN DIV 2LT WITH A M16 AND A VN DRIVER (S)? I WAS NEAR LT AND CALUCATING TO HIT FLOOR OR GO FOR HIS M16. I SAW HE HAD A LONG KNIFE ON HIS THIGH. HE COULD USE THAT.

AFTER ARR AT CU CHI GOT TO BN, COL F SAYS GO OUT WITH HOT MEAL, TAKE CHARLIE CO AT HOC MON BRIDGE, AND DON'T LOOSE IT! Chopper LANDS AT H M BRIDGE AND CHARLIE COMPANY MORE INTERESTED IN THE HOTS THAN ME DIDNT EAT ANTHING THAT DINNER MEAL. GOT A C RAT CAN LATER, DARK, ATE COLD CAN.

MORE DIRECTLY TO UR QUESTION I JOINED CHARLIE ABOUT 9FEB 68 AND DUE TO ODD CERCUMSTANCES WENT DIRECT TO BN OPS, S3 AFTER 58 EXCITING DAYS. I'M PRETTY SURE I SPENT MORE DAYS WITH TF ARMORRG THAN 4/23 M. I THINK COL F TOOK A CHANCE ON ME OR AS I LEARNED LATER NO MAJ WANTED TO COME OUT TO THE FLD. I WAS STILL CPT. BIG HEAD. !?!

OUR MECH BN HAD USUALLY THE BN CDR IN THE AIR, NO NITE, THE OPS OFF, ME ON THE HQ 113, TRK 14. THE HQS HAD NO, REPEAT NO TRK 13 TRK. SUPERSTITIOUS, U BET. OF COURSE LINECOMPANIES HAD 13 TRKS WITH REAL COOL NAMES. MY CHARLIE TRK HAD A LARGE MALTESSE CROSS I HAD PAINTED ON WITH BLACK MAT PAINT. REAL COMO PAINT. THE TROOPS WERE NOT IMPRESSED, STORIES GOT BACK TO ME. THE BN CO IN THE CHOPPER AND ME ON A TRACK I LEARNED THA T DISMOUNT AND SOME MECH S3'S STAYED AT THE F S B. WHATEVER WORKS. THERE WAS POOR LUCK AMOUNG CO C CDRS STARTING ABOUT TET. THE CO AT TET WAS USMA AND DESPISED BY CHARLIE CO. REAL A O. MAY HAVE BEEN BETTER FOR MY ARR. HE GOES OUT ON STRCHR. THEN ME FOR FIFTY EIGHT EXCITING DAYS AND NITES. WHEN I MOVED UP CAME J MELLIS FROM RECON. DID GOOD WORK. HAD EXP WITH RECON. HE STAYED TILL JUN, JUL68. HE WAS BAD GUT SHOT AND OUT TO EVAC. HORRID WOUNDS I LEARNED. NEXT HANK PHILLIPS. HE SERVED TILL FIRST WEEK SEP THEN KIA. I WAS THE LUCKY ONE. AFTER PHILLIPS GOT IT I GOT BANGED W ROAD MINE AND LATER WHEN COL N ANNOUNCED HIS TIME WAS UP I REALLY, REALLY WANTED TO BAIL TO DIV AT CU CHI. COULDNT GET NO ONE TO VOL FOR MY GREAT POSITION. LATER SLID TO BDE FOR S2 INTEL JOB. NEVER IN THE ANNALS OF HUMAN CONFLICT WAS SOMEONE SO OUTA



*HIS ELEMENT. LEARNED FAST TO INFLATE BOD COUNT FOR THE SORRYIST OFFICER I MET EVER!*

*HQS ALWAYS HAD LDRSHIP IN FLD WITH THE COMPANIES. WHEN SINGLE COMPANY OR RECON WERE OUT THEY WERE ON THEIR OWN. DID IT MANY TIMES WITH CHARLEY AS YOU DID. I CAN TELL SPL CH KAPUT SO BEST EVER, CAIN. CANT REM BN HQ AT HOC MON AT THAT TIME. THE 'ECONOMY OF 'FORCE' WAS A FARCE! 2ND BDE JUST STUCK US WHERE EVER WE FOUND GOOKS. TARGET RICH! Real rich. PS AGAIN, THE BN CDR IN THE AIR WAS GOLDEN. RICHER THAN FT KNOX*

\* \* \* \* \*

### **BATTLE OF AP CHO / TAN PHU TRUNG**

[This significant engagement stands relatively alone, so it is reported here slightly out of sequence. [nra – ed.]

As of 13/14 February 68, an est battalion of NVA had taken AP CHO village, on QL-1 southeast of Cu Chi -- a main CSR. The NVA were well entrenched, with good overhead protection and ample food and ammo. 3/22<sup>nd</sup> Infantry made initial contact. Supported by airstrikes and artillery, 3/22<sup>nd</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup> US Inf Div, fought fiercely for over 10 days, retaking a part of the village. On the morning of the 13th, **4<sup>th</sup> Bn, 23<sup>rd</sup> Inf (Mech)** reinforced 3/22<sup>nd</sup> Inf. With APCs arrayed on-line, the Tomahawks began to push into Ap Cho as the enemy fired RPG-7's against the APCs from concrete bunkers and spider holes. The NVA had been ordered to hold at all costs. By that evening, **4<sup>th</sup> Bn, 23<sup>rd</sup> Inf (Mech)** had retaken as much as 1/3 of the village. All that night, artillery and mortars pounded the enemy in the other two-thirds of the town. The morning of 14 Feb saw M-110 self-propelled 8" howitzers firing directly against bunker lines while **C Co, 4<sup>th</sup> Bn 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry (Mech)** went up the middle and the rest of the battalion attacked the flanks. Their success illustrated how a mechanized unit and artillery could be used effectively against bunkers. The NVA were routed, and this part of QL-1 was again secure for resupply convoys.

**On 12 February, 1968 the 4<sup>th</sup> Bn 23<sup>rd</sup> Inf (Mech) had Killed In Action: Max R Beaver, Robert E. Preston, and John C. Price, all of Bravo Company.**

**On 13 February, Donald R. Coleman of Alpha Co, Alex R. Tolparoff of Bravo Co, and two members of Charlie Co: Larry F. Peeples, and Lt Donald Leta. Database notes location as: "Ap Cho 8km NW of Hoc Mon."**

**February 14 saw Frank R. Beavers, HHC; Bennie L. Martin, Charlie Co, Lionel M. Phillips, Bravo Co, and David J. Moncavage, HHC also Killed In Action. All are noted "Ap Cho" in the Coffelt Database. All have Coffelt database notation: AP CHO, 8 KM NW OF HOC MON 1968 FEB13-14**

**On 15 February, Vernon H. Lackey of HHC was KIA.**

**Killed in action on 26 February :**

**Michael Cotton, HHC**  
**Steven V. Goldstein, Charlie Co**  
**Larry K. Lannom , HHC**  
**Joseph A. Zuniga, Charlie Co**

**Killed in action 28 February:**  
**Archie Anderson, Bravo Co**  
**Dennis P. Clancey, Bravo Co**  
**Robert W. Howdon, HHC**  
**Jerry D. Leak, Bravo Co**  
**Walter C. Shillito, Bravo Co**

In his exit interview from the 25<sup>th</sup> Division given 21 May, 1968, LTC **Avery Fullerton** **notes**, “. . .the battalion [4<sup>th</sup>/23<sup>rd</sup>(M)] then for most of February and March was concerned with road security operations, which resulted in a number of very good sized contacts, particularly on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> of February, a couple of medium-sized ones in later February and early March, and then a big sized one at Trang Bang in March (p. 2). . . . There were two major contacts during this period. One was the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> of February when we fought a battalion of, I believe, the VC 271<sup>st</sup> Regt in the town of Ap Cho and Tan Phu Trung . . . This battalion had been there about two weeks and was causing some minor problem, nothing very major. But it was finally decided it was time to eject them, so we ejected them in a two-day battle (p. 8).”

LTC Fullerton continues, “One fire support weapon that we used on one occasion, and I don’t think it’s ever been used since was the use of the eight inch howitzer in the direct-fire role. We used it at that battle of Tan Phu Trung and you do have to pull it back quite a ways to shoot it because the back splash is around 400 to 500 yards of the thing. But if you have the enemy really pinpointed and you know just where to shoot . . . the thing is marvelous. It just blows the position to smithereens and it seems to have – at least it seemed to me to have a better effect than, say, eight inch indirect fire.” (pp. 34-35) [emphasis added – ed.]

\* \* \* \* \*

From 25<sup>th</sup> Division Quarterly ending April 30 covering BATTLE OF AP CHO:

(b) In Tan Phu Trung, XT7009, damage was extensive. An intensive combat effort was required to eliminate the VC from that area. A large portion, estimated 80%, of the village was destroyed and an estimated 2000 people moved from the area. As security conditions improved, a damage survey was conducted. It was necessary to spray the area with an insecticide in an attempt to control large numbers of insects that collected in the area immediately following the attack, and to minimize a possible health problem. No rebuilding was initiated as few of the people returned to the area and any assistance would have been premature.

From LESSONS LEARNED section:

(a) OBSERVATION: The use of 8" Howitzer as a bunker buster.

(b) EVALUATION: During the battle of AP CHO, a battalion used LAWs and 90mm recoilless rifles in an attempt to eliminate resistance from hardened bunkers. These weapons had little/no effect on the bunkers nor the individuals manning them. The battalion asked for and received an 8" self propelled Howitzer to be employed as a direct fire "bunker buster" from a range of around 750 m.

(c) RECOMMENDATION: The direct fire method using the self propelled Howitzer as a "sniper rifle" was extremely effective. Elimination of the use of several smaller weapons proved quite satisfactory as the 8" gun was capable of eliminating each individual bunker with one round.

\* \* \* \* \*

From Online Website if Charlie Co, 2<sup>nd</sup> 22<sup>nd</sup> Infantry:

*The Battle for Ap Cho was fought between 1-18 February, 1968. Large concentrations of Viet Cong soldiers had massed around Cu Chi and were well dug in around the village of Ap Cho. [Tan Phu Trung – nra]. It was a medium sized cluster of perhaps 100 buildings, hooches of thatch roofs and sandy mortar walls. The hamlet was just a few kilometers south of Cu Chi and lay astride the main supply route. The 3rd Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, under the command of LTC. Thomas U. Harrold, was called upon to engage the enemy and drive them from their locations. The Battalion was forced to attack it daily until all the enemy were killed.*

*For a period of thirteen days, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Bn, 22nd Infantry, supported by other units, moved against the enemy in continual attacks against these fortified positions. Inch by inch they fought their way through the village, hacking away at the bunkers and routing the enemy in close quarter combat.*

*It was obvious the North Vietnamese soldiers who had dug in there had no intentions of giving up or fleeing. They were determined to fight to the end, and that is exactly what they did, that is--they all died before the hands of the Infantry and the supporting fires.*

*Each morning, the 3-22 units would pass the line of departure, fix bayonets, and attack the enemy positions, often without any fire support or promise of success. Little by little, they gained ground destroying the enemy positions and their occupants. Often they evacuated their own dead and wounded by oxcart.*

*The battle was long and fierce. The 3-22 worked beside the **4-23 Infantry Mechanized**; units of the 17th and 4th Cavalry; numerous batteries of artillery from the 5th, 8th, 77th, and 13th Artillery Battalions: the 116th, 187th, 125th, 205th, 269th, and 242nd Assault Helicopter Companies. Thirty airstrikes initiated the final assault, laying waste to the battle zone as the combined arms team attacked.*

*After an extraordinary fighting effort by the infantry and tanks, coupled with immense support from the air and artillery, the battle was won. Although the struggle received little notice and was anti-climatic considering that the Tet Offensive was in full swing, the victory marked a major upset to the enemy's plans to sever the main supply route to 25th Division units.*

*Enemy KIA from the action exceeded 253. Six POW's were taken along with tons*

of enemy weapons and supplies. American losses were 44 KIA, six more died, not from hostile action, and more than 134 were wounded.

\* \* \* \* \*

e-mails:

May 26, 02

I remember at times we had as much as 10 to a squad. Other times much less. Most of the time we had at least eight for ambush patrol and tried for ten.

Feb of 68 we only had about ten left after battle in Ap Cho in 1st platoon A co. They were good at that time about getting new replacements.

We had lost all our tracks and had to tow them to Bien Hoa and get new ones. Tet is one time I'll never forget. Oh well you all caught me in a moment. That powdered milk was in a Foremost carton. Orange, white, and you guys are right about it tasting like crap!! I liked opening the sundry box from the people back home. They had candy, writing material, cigarettes, and cigars. You guys have brought back some good memories and thanks!!

Brock 67-68 A Co

Aug 14, 02

Do you remember a 3 day firefight at a village called AP CHO? It was March 13th, 14th and 15th. I remember 2 flamethrower tracks getting hit (RPG) and losing everyone on both Tracks. I could feel the heat coming from them when they exploded. These days will forever be remembered as we lost sooo many in the 3 days and all our tracks. Please reply!!!

Brock

2/27/03

Hi -- My name is Nick Dragon I would like to Find the guy that took me and our other wounded guys to Cu Chi. I was wounded on the 5 Feb 68, you lost a few tracks that day. You guys got me back to Cu Chi and I am so. Here is my name address and phone number.

Nick Dragon

134 E. Coy, Hazel Park, Mi. 48030

[www.c322association.org](http://www.c322association.org)

Jul 25, '02

I too, have had those days that you mentioned in June 6 1969. I have to say these were the worst and the best times of my young life. I was A-Co 4/23rd and was there during Tet-68. Had similar situations like you. You should write a book as you did so well with your short story. Look forward to hearing what you have to say!! Welcome Home and God Bless.

Brock Sloan

Aug 25, '02

A few days into Tet Recon was sent to Ton Son Nhut to escort the resupply convoy to Cu Chi and Tay Ninh. On the way back we waited for a leg outfit to clear the village on highway 1 south of Cu Chi [ I'm not sure if this is part of Cu Chi village].

*When we went thru at full speed I thought if there were friendly along the road they must have been firing at us too. Cause there were too many bullets flying around us to just be coming a few NVA or VC. A few days later 4/23 went out the gate north and kind of attacked the rear of the village. Recon had the left flank. We weren't catching a lot of fire only 1 WIA that morning. But to our right A Co I think was catching it bad. I saw one Track blow. I thought at the time it was a FLAME Track. But it was a gas Track.*

*At noon we regrouped, got re-supplied, and up on the grapevine. Such as 90 recoilless bouncing off bunkers. When we got back on line we were in the place A Co had taking a beating. I thought if they didn't make it in that Morning my chances of being on my feet the next morning wasn't too good. I was scared lots of times but this was my scariest [Too much time to think about it] We were on line waiting for the word move out. But we heard get inside and heard this clanking noise. It was a 8 in self-propelled gun. It fired point blank over our heads. There was a lobbing sound than a loud explosion. Recon was then sent to pic.*

*- - - new message resumes*

*Aug 25 (cont)*

*I must have got scared again wasn't ready to send! Recon was sent to pick up the resupply convoy and take to Tay Ninh. The next time we saw the village it had been dozed down. There were still some destroyed vehicles there. Just wondered if anyone else remembers this.*

*James*

*August 15, 2002*

*Tom, I got in country the first part of January 68 and I left in January 69. There were 11 of us replacements for C Co. I was the only one to make it home. We never made one class of the In-Country training. They would just send us to the bunker line. We got mortared every night. One night they hit the battalion ammo dump at about dark and we had shrapnel flying around the bunker till after day light. When we came out of the bunker the first two rows of hooches were flattened. Then I got picked to go out with the flame platoon. We went to the field in a bunch of gas tracks from the 5th mech. Your right about the soccer field. Highway 1 was on one side, a cemetery was on the town side, and the rest was fields. As a matter of fact I spent 79 days in the field before I got back to Cu Chi. That was when we moved to Tay Ninh. I was an old timer by then. I drove track and I had two blown up with me in them. One was a gas track outside the back gate of Cu Chi. The other was at Ap Cho. There was only fifteen people left in the Co after the firefight outside the back gate of Cu Chi. They put us with the Wolf Hounds until they got us built back up. Then we went with the Dreadnought Task Force. Well I could go on and on. Anyway, I remember the Flame Platoon fondly.*

*JW Russell*

*June 22, 03*

*I can remember the day we went in there. It was maybe 10am or so and we had to wait outside of village when they had air strikes and brought in the self propelled 155s and the 8 inch gun. I remember saying I have never seen an artillery gun that large. These guns were shooting beehive rounds point blank into the village.*

*Dreadnaught (2<sup>nd</sup>/34<sup>th</sup> Armor = Tank Co.) was there too shooting their guns as we went in. Saw a Flame Track catch an RPG and blew up. Do you think this was the heat you felt on your right flank?*

*Lost rest of the tracks 1st platoon that time. I was under my track shooting an M-60 and 3/4cav pulled up on the right flank and as soon as they got hit they backed up and I remember saying to myself, Where the hell are they going?*

*As I was shooting the M-60 I saw the gooks on disabled tracks trying to get the 50s off. Lost track of you and the rest of the platoon until we were able to get a track without a gun from headquarters Company. A guy named Chapman from mortars platoon helped me get a gun and I found a guy named Dunkel and off we went to save you guys in the 1st platoon. Dunkel got shot as soon as we got back to the front and I had to go back to get him aid and dusted off.*

*I was between a blowed up tank and a blown up track when Kris Engblum showed up outta nowhere and back we went up front to help the 1st platoon. That's when we found you and the rest of the 1st platoon all shot up and several 3/22 boys as well. Well Terry you know the rest of the story as was told when we hooked up in Washington in 2000. I was shocked that you looked so well after being shot up so bad. They did a heck of a job getting your face to look so good. I didn't know you that well as you were fairly new to platoon but I can say I'm proud to have been there with you, and to help you, and to call you a friend today.  
Luv Ya!!! Brock*

*June 22, 03*

*I always had in the back of my mind the leg outfits had tried to take the village from the Hiway 1 side up until that day. 4/23 was trying a different direction. Is this possible? I left while the 8" guns were firing. I can't imagine what the rest of you guys went thru and I've seen a little on my tour.*

*James*

*Feb 5, 06*

*Brock and others*

*I've been thinking of the sound of the 8 in gun rambling down the road and how scared I was standing on line waiting for the word to move forward. I was thinking no one made it into the village this morning so how am I going to make it. When they gave the word to get inside the track and we heard the lob and the bang of the shell it was quiet a relief. Then we got the word to make the mad dash down hwy 1 to pick up the resupply convoy. My hat's off and a big SALUTE to you guys that finished the job at AP CHO.*

*Farmer*

*June 23, 03*

*Your left flank. abandoned?? I am shocked, shocked I say. You are right about one thing though, thank God we can find some humor in all of this.*

*Steve*

June 24, 03

Update- just remembered the name of Chuck Boyle's Book "Absolution"-the book primarily tells of his unit's actions - very little about we Tomahawks. Also some Tomahawk Histories state that the 8 inch gun was bore sighted into Ap Cho bunkers on 14 Feb...I don't remember seeing anything like that on the second day of we Tomahawks being there but I do remember after we A Company withdrew from our attack...leaving 2 of my 1st platoon damaged APCs there....that the 8 inch guns fired line of sight/bore sighted from a small perimeter we A Company APCs made on afternoon of 13 Feb 68-our first day there - is also called village of Tan Phu Trung and Ap Cho is a hamlet -part of the village.

Am not sure it was Wolfhounds at Ap Cho am confident it was C Company 3/22 Inf a leg unit...Chuck Boyle wrote a book of the situation ..his unit there about 10 days prior to Tomahawks getting the invite to go on line there. - believe all or most of the 3/22 Inf was at this engagement....they initially found them.-the very strong resistance caused much concern...thus we Mechanized got an "invite to come" on 13 Feb 68.

About Recon on left side on 13th ...believe we **A Company 4/23d** had that position later as 1st Platoon 's initial mission was to screen left flank of Battalion then after our 3d platoon got shot up ... 1st platoon went through their lines and forward...It was supposed to be a full Battalion push forward however seems like only 1sr Platoon A Company went any distance forward...thus exposing our right flank too....we lost 2 - 1st Platoon APCs the one on right flank from RPGs (went up in a large fireball as I was a few feet from entering in it to try moving it and other track lost by mine as it went forward). The old timers there had a bad feeling about Ap Cho as we began on 13th ...they were right.

Terry A Co **4/23** 1st Platoon Class of Tet 68

Feb 12, 06

Donn: For the past 3 years I believe we have had a running commentary on AP CHO. It was the worst 3 days that I ever been thru. The question I always had was that I did not remember Bravo Co. being there on the 14th. I do remember on the 12th that Alpha was in the middle with Recon on the far left and the 3/22 on the right. I was with Charlie Co. in the rear about a half mile for support. Alpha took a beating that day with about 4 or 5 tracks blown up and when the flame-thrower track got hit it shot a stream of flame 200 feet in the air. I remember looking at it and thinking the whole Company must have blown up. Terry was badly wounded on that day.

I called a friend named Howard G. who was with Bravo from June 67-68. In January he started riding on Bravo 6's track. He said he kept a journal while riding with 6 and he read the parts about Ap Cho. He wrote that on the 12th Bravo did try and make a night "surprise attack" (I asked him how you make a surprise attack with an APC). He said he asked 6 the same question as he was new. You remember that Capt. Kowalski [Korecki – ed.] was killed Feb.3. He said the attack was a cluster and they had to pull out. On the morning of the 13th he said they were ordered to Bac Hau (right outside of Hoc Mon). On the 14th they were headed toward Saigon and were sent over to the village named Than Phu Trung [= Ap Cho Ed.] where the 272nd NVA were waiting. He said they entered a clearing about a half mile from the village and the NVA came pouring out of the village. He said there must have been 3- to 400 in uniform which he thought funny until he realized about half of

*them were carrying RPG's. He said they lined up and started firing with everything they had, a flame track and 2 tanks firing bee-hive rounds. He wrote that 12 men were killed with one of them being my medic friend Doc Frank Beavers. They counted around 150 bodies of NVA but he said they knew they had killed more than that. He also said that 6 more Tomahawks died later in hospitals due to their battle wounds. They had so many wounded that they had to medically stand down on the 15th.*

*On the 14<sup>th</sup>, Charlie Co. was about the only company left and we were about half strength. We charged into the village with 3/22 on the right for support. The only thing about that was that they were about 50 yards behind us. I later asked a 3/22 medic what the heck they were doing? His reply was that they were supporting us from the rear. I told him the enemy was in front of us and not in the rear. Those guys had been trying to take Ap Cho for 10 days before we got there but yet their CO. Capt. Hemphill wrote a book named "Platoon Bravo Co", in which he declared that they had taken the village and we had been beaten back without any success. What a bunch of crock. During the 3 days that I was there most of his troops were trying to imitate being a groundhog. Anyway, when we pushed through the village on the 14th the NVA had mostly slipped away during the night and we only had a few snipers that were quickly dispatched with.*

*I think Donn that there was so much confusion during those 3 days that it was easy to not know where you were. I usually didn't worry about that,, only to hope to see the sunset every night. On the 15th the medics that were left helped graves registration team try and find any missing KIAs. That flame track that blew the first day had melted right down to the ground and the poor men inside had vaporized. I mean we didn't find a bone or anything. It was an awful mess to see and I still have a sick feeling every Valentine's day when I think about it. I know Terry, Brock, Joel, Farmer and others have their own memories that were there. The Tomahawks won that battle, not the 3/22 which seems to be the common thought. The whole Battalion was so short of men that we had to stand down medically. This is my best recollection of those days at Ap Cho and hope it adds a few more pieces to the puzzle of our 3 days in Hell.*

*Doc John 67-68*

*Feb 14, 06*

*Stan D. called me last night to thank my wife for Sunday dinner. I told him that there was controversy over "the village" battle in mid Feb. I asked him to think about what he saw or remembered. The first thing he said was the village was very close to Cu Chi. He remembered being there in the village when it was taken and that the whole place was flattened. His first memory was of a tank exploding with the turret coming off, and thinking "what am I into?" Bravo company was in the village during the daylight but prior to evening they were given the order to mount up and proceed towards Tan Son Nhut for a possible attack. They took the road toward Saigon and somewhere near Tan Son Nhut they left the road and set up a night perimeter. He remembers digging a foxhole and putting out claymores. He said that night all hell broke loose and he saw waves of enemy troops trying to break thru the perimeter. He remembers have a couple of tanks and some other foot unit there. In the morning (16<sup>th</sup> maybe??)the ground was litter with beaucoup enemy dead he thinks the tanks*



really were the backbreaker to the them because he remembers their consistent firing devastating the on rushing gooks.

Donn

Mar 13, 06

Agree with Brock...it never goes away...I still see the first Charlie I killed just a hands length from me., then the 6-8 others that popped up suddenly behind our lines...and hear the AK-47 pinned us down moments before you came in with Brock and all...still feel the heat of the flame APC that blew on 13th – never goes away. Terry B.

Mar 16, 06 -- (possibly two messages pasted into one) My memory is better than "dirty Stan's" but nowhere as good as Lovins.

Did "B" Co pull out and go somewhere else? So many memories say it can't be. For instance the 8" guns firing thru the night if they were at Ap Cho how could they be firing at another location- a different arty group?? that pounding was unforgettable. Was Ap Cho entered on the 14th or the 15th??i was dusted off at night (never could forget that interior red light)-I never entered any village.

My health record reads:

15 Feb 68 4/23 Bn aid station  
pt sustained f w of (r) arm  
1st & 3rd fingers, (l)thumb & (l)arm  
wound cleaned & h2o2 dressed  
qtrs x 24hrs, return daily

John W.

? - [formatting error in original] Hqs office, chief of legislative liaison, relating that on 13 Feb 68I received a fragment wound in the right arm and on the 14th Feb I was similarly wounded in the left arm.

Lovins and I talked about that hellhole and over and over again how the companies operated independently unless they had to assist a sister company or recon or occasionally set up at a fire supp base. Lovins' track lost 2 guys on the 28th Feb. assisting recon in a village ambush, he also was wounded.

Could it be that "B" was repositioned to come from a different direction?? John, I only know that we were not with a-c or recon when we were going into cu chi base camp during the afternoon of the 12th, there was a good feeling heading in my recollection of the 13th was of repeatedly getting in a few yards farther every time we went in on line before they cut loose by the 14th ,the track had only Cruz the driver, Hardison in the back hatch and myself as TC.- the impact of the bullets hitting the sides and the explosions all around made me think I would get a heart attack. It was hard to look around - all eyes were glued to the front watching for any head to pop up with an RPG. sometimes I refer to the wall for info (no it's far from perfect but somebody had to enter it) Ap Cho was in Hau Nghia Prov. Hoc Mon was in Gia Dinh Prov. The KIAs listed for the 12th were max beaver/Preston/price 'B' company Hau Nghia, the 13th were Colman /Tolparoff/ Leta/ Peeples all 'A' Company Hau Nghia ,the 14th were Phillips B comp. Hau Nghia/Martin 'c' comp. Binh Duong Prov. / Moncavage HHC comp. Gia Dinh the 15th Lackey HHC comp. Gia Dinh. Now the

*guy named beaver you knew if I remember right was listed with a different unit so much for perfection!! I'm hoping you and the guy with the diary can come to the reunion I'm bringing Lovins with me-we can talk about nightmares and old stitches. Take care all my best to you,  
Donnie M.*

*Dec 15, 06*

*Farmer, S5 was a combination MEDCAPs and psychological operations. after getting a small piece of shrapnel in the chin at FSB Rawlins on the 28th of Aug, they decided I was to become a housecat with 1st Bde at Tay Ninh. That's where I met Comstock , his MOS was non-combat so he only occasionally came out into the field. During the MEDCAPs we would be assigned a small truck loaded with t-shirts, soap and whatever else the villagers needed and leave Tay Ninh ( in broad daylight) with just an MP jeep. I rode shotgun (M-16) while Justin drove.*

*I was still in Cu Chi up till March 5th- 68. after the beginning of Feb Bravo Co was really taking the casualties ( ambush on the 3rd of February- 5 KIA including Capt. Korecki., 15 seriously WIA/ then the village attacks 12th-15th February ( 4 KIA, 7 seriously WIA ) they had us stand down for a week. George and Stan the Polack got thru Ap Cho without being hit (AMAZING). there was some smaller actions on the 22nd/23rd all near Cu Chi. But on the 28th, recon got into a village ambush and apparently bravo was the closest to respond. George's track was the lead and as soon as they got inside (within sight of recon's tracks) they got RPGd - 4 were KIA and 6 WIA.*

*George got wounded either by shrapnel or bone fragments because one RPG made a direct hit on one of the guys sitting next to George. Richard M was still wearing a bandage on his upper arm from Ap Cho, he got fed up in Cu Chi with all the details and left to go into the field early. I broke my stitches carrying ammo crates on the details so I convalesced longer. George stayed in Cu Chi recovering all thru March. George has a great memory, Stan the Pollack asked him if he remembered the guy who was always crying in the field- George told him guys name.  
Donn*

*Dec 27, 07*

*Doug, All - I looked this up [below] on the 116th Assault Company being based at Cu Chi part of their time in response from Muleskinner Roger, who was with the "Muleskinners" flying in support at Ap Cho. . Maybe they reported thru Avn channels to 11th Avn Bde like the Muleskinners did. (?) I'm pretty sure 25th Avn Co was organic to the 25th Div. Seems like some assignments of support units was organic, some was assigned through a branch support HQs, sort of like some Arty was, too. (name?)*

*Dec 27, 07*

*Muleskinner Roger -- if you are monitoring this traffic, perhaps you'd care to comment on the assignment of Avn Units which seems to have been separate from basing. Found this second piece below on Ap Cho on the 116<sup>th</sup>.  
Neil*

Feb 28, 08

We lost a medic on an A Co track at Ap Cho. I know we sifted the hull for a couple of days looking for a tooth or bone fragment. Can't remember his name at the moment.  
Steve

Feb 28, 08

Steve, -- That would have been Vernon L. who died 14th Feb 68. They listed him as KIA the 15th. We had to leave him so we could evacuate the wounded. Never will forget that day. They got his body the next day and on the wall it says KIA 25 Feb 1968.

Brock

Jan 31, 08

Doc, you are correct the Bravo losses occurred so quickly that you couldn't ponder much, it was wham bam and what the hell is happening. but the Ap Cho/Tan Phu Trung village battles in mid February showed me what was really terrifying. it was the offensive line assault - over and over again. the mental challenge of going into a meat grinder time and time again. no matter what, after a while, paranoia sets in, and you can only hope your wound won't be catastrophic.

After almost the whole squad was taken away to Cu Chi, you choose up who will drive, who will TC, and who was going to ride in the back hatch put the 50 ammo box up on top?? that was my dilemma on the 14th, I had to fire the 50 from underneath too much shit was pinging off of the cupola, I had wrapped a flak jacket around my legs inside while standing on 50 ammo boxes. KEEP up the 50 fire, it may stop an RPG from being fired at us. it was a nightmare battle that I was only too happy to leave on the night of the 14th on that glorious dust off.

Donn M

Feb 14, 08

Doc, Here is part on Ap Cho, copied from the Archive:

A. Information concerning Hoc Mon Area for Operation Saratoga was obtained from 25th Division G-2 sources, II Field Force PERINTREP and visual reconnaissance missions.

(1) The main area of operation, Hoc Mon, was being utilized by VC/NVA units as areas for headquarters for major elements directing the TET Offensive against Saigon/Tan San Nhut. In addition, the "rocket belt" formed an arc through the western portion of Hoc Mon area. Many of the rockets used against the airfield at TSN were launched from this "rocket belt".

(2) VC/NVA in the entire area encompassing Saigon were conducting ambushes on MSR's (main supply routes) in a vain attempt to hamper logistical operations and to prohibit the dispatch of friendly reinforcements to areas of major VC/NVA attacks.

(3) Units believed to be located in the Hoc Mon area were 271<sup>st</sup> and 272<sup>d</sup> VC Regiments. Document readouts and interrogation reports evolving from contacts between enemy and friendly forces during the reporting period confirmed the presence of these two regiments as well as 267<sup>th</sup> and 269<sup>th</sup> Battalions. In addition it is believed that elements of the HQ 9<sup>th</sup> VC Division were located vicinity XT766048."

Brock

Apr 4, 08

Jerry -- Man O Man do I remember those deals you've mention. There has been a lot of memories of AP Cho relived on here. Joel Johnson and Eddie Madaris were with us at that time and are members of this site. Paul Hopper that was on 5's track and crawled in the tunnel system is going to be at the reunion in June. You might as well come on down also. I'll tip you off to something we have a lot of fun on this site. So along with the serious stuff there is some leg pulling going on. I can already see you've got problems on your hands everyone on here thinks there outfit was the best. You may be getting bribes to umpire the Charley CO and Recon match since you were in both.

Farmer

Sep 30, 08

Neil -- you are probably right, that the photo of the tank among the tracks was not from the Feb 12 - Feb 15 village battles (Ap Cho/Tan Phu Trung) . Russell Costa and Peter Salvanish went together for R&R to Taipei on the 5th of February. Sgt. Lewis, Brian Dunn and Richard Phillips left for Bangkok R&R on the next day the 6th.so unless Sgt. Lewis got that photo from someone else it was not from that timeframe.

Sgt. Lewis and Peter Salvanish DEROS together on April 1st the same day Captain Thomas Sutton left the field. Concerning the 28th of February, Bravo Company had 4 KIA and 6 wounded that had to be sent to the 12th Evac. More were wounded but treated at the battalion medical in Cu Chi. (George Lovins, John Hardison and Sgt. Lewis.

Donn

Dec 9, 08

I was riding atop the track (before I became a track driver) when we were passing a tank with this grubby Sgt. smoking a turd (short stubby cigar) he yelled over to us. "Do any of you want to drive for me". His tank was apparent assigned to us (Bravo Company). I remember him repeating it again and sounding like he was challenging any of us to do it. so I volunteered (after all I was 11b the bottom of the barrel). Lovins and the rest of the crew just looked at me and shook their heads.

The Sgt. gave me a 3 minute lesson on M48 [tank – ed.] operation. just after that Lt. Bates came up and asked for a shot from the 90mm(?) at the hole where the gook was in.

The Sgt. told me we had no commo in the tank and when he would shout "round on the way" DUCK YOUR HEAD. While sitting crouched down in that driver's hatch for several minutes, I looked up and he fired it. The blast almost knocked me out from hitting my head on the back of the hatch. The gook unbelievably was still able to fire his AK47. That's when the Sgt. ordered me to do a pivot steer. It ended up be a lucky move for me because while awaiting a replacement driver that very night Bravo Co left the night position to assist an artillery unit that was being overrun. A couple of Bravo guys died during bravo's rescue operation.

I stayed a couple of days with the tank at a road junction fortress (sandbagged) slept on top of the tank because the Green Berets and their ARVNs did not like strangers in their house.

Donn

[Following email is capitalized in the original.]

June 27, 2011

I'D LIKE TO ADD SOME MORE INFO TO THIS SUBJ. I JOINED THE 4/23 M AT THE END OF 1ST WEEK OF FEB 68 AT THE HOC MON BRIDGE. COL. FULLERTON, BN CDR CHARGED ME 'TO NOT LOOSE THAT BRIDGE'. I LATER LEARNED THAT GREATER THAN 90% OF THE DIV SUPPLIES CROSSED THAT BRIDGE PLUS OTHER UNITS LIKE 175 MM GUN AMMO FOR ' FRENCH FORT ', AND THE GUYS ON NUI BA DIEN, ETC. AT THAT TIME WE WERE WORKING FOR 2ND BDE OUT OF CU CHI. THE BN MISSION WAS TO KEEP THE DIV MAIN SUPPLY ROUTE OPEN AS TET HAD FOULED IT UP. WE PICKED UP LOG CONVOYS FROM THE MPS N OF TSN. THAT'S WHERE I LEARNED TO MOUNT A JEEP PAX SEAT TO THE M113 JUST OVER THE FUEL CAP. THE SEAT WAS HINGED FOR FUELING. THE NEXT WEEK WAS AP CHO, TAN PHU TRAN FOR THREE DAYS. I CAN BARELY REMEMBER. COL FULLERTON BROUGHT TWO 8" HOWS TO FIRE DIRECT ABOUT 800 M INTO AP CHO. FRIGHTENED US MORE THAN THE CONG. LIFTED SEVERAL CUBIC YDS OF DIRT AND SPIDER HOLES EACH ROUND. AP CHO WAS VERY BUSY'. THE NEXT WEEK AFTER REORGANIZING, CHARLIE CO WAS ATTACHED TO TF DREADNAUGHT, 2BN 34 ARMD WITH A BN HQ, THEIR RECON PLATOON, THE BN HQ TANK SEC OF 4 M48, 90MM GUNS AND ONE TANK WITH A DOZER BLADE ATTACHED. I'M SURE YOU REMEMBER RIDING THE TRACKS ACROSS DRY RICE DIKES. WITH THAT DOZER BLADE IN THE LEAD IT WAS SMOOTHER THAN A TN INTERSTATE. NO MORE TRACKS GOING BELLY UP/DOWN AND THROWING TRACKS. CHARLIE CO 4/23 M AND TF DREADNAUGHT HAD BEEN JOINED BY A COMPANY FROM 1BN 5 M. IT WAS SURELY THE WORST COMPANY IN THE DIV. ENOUGH SAID. EARLIER, UPON JOINING DREADNAUGHT AT CU CHI , 3RD WEEK OF FEB 68, A FIRE FIGHT BROKE OUT ABOUT 500 M BEYOND THE BACK GATE AND C 4/23, THE 4 TANKS (sharks) AND HQ TF DREADNAUGHT HAD A REAL SHOOT OUT JUST 1/2 KCLICK BEYOND THE WIRE AT CU CHI. THE DIV, JUST 1/2 K AWAY, BROUGHT IN FOUR F100'S, WITH, HIDRAG 500 POUNDERS. MORE EXCITEMENT. THE BAD GUYS WERE IN THE ORIG TUNNELS OF CU CHI. THEY ESCAPED BY TUNNEL. THE RATS OF CU CHI WERE ENJOYING THE TF AND USAF/ ARTY SHOW. I BELIEVE THE 4/23 BN (-) CO C WAS STILL OPENING THE MSR AND GETTING OFF ROAD TO BEAT THE BASTARDS BACK. TF DREADNAUGHT HAD COUPLE OF FIRE FIGHTS. IN ONE, MY ARTY FO, WHO COULD GET ROUNDS ON THE WAY WITHIN 2-3 MIN OF THE FIRST VC/NVA SMALL ARMS OR RPG IN COMING. HE WAS A GREAT GUNNER. HE WAS ADJUSTING 155 MM ONE DAY WHEN THE DREADNAUGHT FO WITH DREADNAUGHT IN THE HELO SAID 'I'LL TAKE OVER DUE TO MY SUPERIOR VANTAGE POINT'. HE DID. FORGOT TO TELL THE FIRE DIR CENT THAT HE BEGAN TO ADJUST ON THE GUN TO TARGET LINE AND MY FO WAS USING THE OBSERVER TO TARGET LINE. SUDDENLY 5 TO 6 ONE FIVE FIVES CAME CRASHING IN. WHAT A COCK UP! A NBC REPORTER, CAMERAMAN AND SOUND-MAN WERE INTERVIEWING ME WHEN THE CRAP HIT THE FAN. WHEN THE FILM MADE THE NIGHTLY NEWS IN TN

MY WIFE'S AUNT VIEWED IT AND TOLD MY WIFE I WAS DEAD. ONE PIECE OF A 155 BLEW THE SOUND MAN DOWN AND KNOCKED THE SOUND EQUIP OUT TO THE NEXT PROVENCE. YES, I'VE BEEN KNOWN TO STRETCH A STORY. NBC NEWS HAD ME ON IN ONE SECOND SPEAKING AND THE DOWNED SOUND MAN (WITHOUT SOUND) ON THE NEXT. CONFUSING TO THE CIVILIANS. AT THIS TIME C 4/23 WAS DOWN TO 46 MEN ON THE LINE. CONTINUING IMPACT OF AP CHO AND LATER EVENTS. I ASK DREADNAUGHT FOR A HELO RIDE TO CU CHI TO GET MAN POWER. ARRIVED BN HQ AND C CO REAR AND STARTED SHAKING THE BUSHES. THE BN XO WAS OUT AND BN REAR HQ SENT THE CHAPLAIN. HE SAID 'THESE WALKING WOUNDED' CAN'T BE REQUIRED TO RETURN TO THE LINE'. HE GOT CURSED OUT AND SLINKED AWAY. LEFT A MSG FOR THE XO TO GET THE MEN OUT OR SEND THE C CO XO ON THE NEXT HELO. MANPOWER IMPROVED. THE BN, 2ND BDE AND DIV ASKED A LOT FROM THE SOLDIERS AND I'M CONVINCED THEY GAVE ALL THEY COULD. CO C, FINALLY RETURNED TO THE BN. IN RETROSPECT I SPENT THREE OR FOUR MORE DAYS WITH DREADNAUGHT THAN WITH THE BN AS CO CDR. I GOT TO KNOW CPT M MONTGOMERY, COL JIM HALES, RECON MELLIS, THE HHC CO AND COL FULLERTON AND OUR DS BATTERY. WE FOUGHT ANKLE BITERS UP AND DOWN THE MSR. NEIL, IT'S ABOUT FORTH WEEK APR AND STILL ASSIGNED TO SEC BDE. ON MY 58TH DAY WITH CO C THE OPS OFF, S3 CAME TO ME AND MY RADIO GROUP TO SEE WHAT WAS STOPPING THE PROGRESS. WE WERE DISMOUNTED FOR THE SWEEP. M. MONTGOMERY WAS ON THE LEFT SIDE OF A ROAD WE WERE CLEARING. C CO PERSONNEL HAD WOUNDED A WATER BUF WITH CALF. THIS WAS REPORTED. HE SAID, 'I'LL GO FORWARD AND SEE IF I CAN HELP. THIS MIFFED ME. HE WAS NEW TO ME AND THE BN. HE GOES FORWARD W A RTO AND WITHIN TWO MIN'S AUTO WPNS GUNFIRE BROKE OUT. THE WATER BUF HAD FOUND HIM. CAN'T REMEMBER WITNESSING MORE BLOOD FROM ONE CASUALTY. I'M SURE DOC WOODS REMEMBERS THAT CASE. C CO AND A CO MEDICS TOOK EVERY BANDAGE AVAIL TO TRY AND STOP THE FLOW OF BLOOD. COL FULLERTON DROPPED DOWN WITH HIS SMALL HELO, THE MEDICS STRAPPED THE S3 IN AND FULLERTON FLEW HIM TO DIV HOSP VERY FAST. THE MEDICS UNUSUAL TOURNIQUETS AND SHORT FLIGHT SAVED HIS LIFE. THE COW BUF HAD HOOKED HIM FROM THE BACK OF THE KNEE TO A NEW SPLIT IN HIS BUTTOX AND WIPED OUT THAT ARTERY. ONE OF THE MEDICS HAD APPLIED A CLAMP TO THAT ARTERY WAY UP INTO THE BUTTOX. THEY WERE GOOD. THE NEXT DAY COL F. TOLD ME TO BECOME THE S3. AREAL SURPRISE. TOOK THE C CO FIRST SGT TO BECOME THE BN OPS SGT. HE WAS THROUGH AND REMEMBERED EVERYTHING. YOU'LL SEE LATER HOW THIS WAS IMPORTANT TO ME. NEIL, TO MY MEMORY THE BN WAS 2ND BDE TILL EARLY MAY 68 AND COL F TOOK THE BN TO TAY NINH, 1ST BDE, ABOUT 1 MAY AND RAWLINS WAS BORN. CHANGE OF COMMAND OCCURRED W COL NEILSON IN COMMAND. MONTGOMERY, CO A, JIM HALES CO B AND MELLIS FROM RECON WAS CO C. GOOD WORKING GROUP. COL N. SOON TOOK US BACK TO NW CORNER OF TON SUN NUT ABOUT LATE JUN 68.

RAINY SEASON HAD STARTED AND WE WERE TOTAL ROAD BOUND. WE WERE REASSIGNED TO SEC BDE. WHILE THERE, A STUPID MAIN FORCE VC REGT (?) TRIED TO GO THROUGH US TO TSN. DIV HAD GOOD INTEL. GREAT SHOOTING FOR TWO + DAYS. FIRST TIME I THINK THE BN EVER RAN SHORT OF AMMO. TARGET RICH PERIOD! SOME UNRECORDED BN TROOPS SHOT OFF FLAIRS, FOUR JULY, AT THE END OF TSN RUNWAY AND THE AF AND USARVN CO-LOCATED, COMPLAINED TO COL N. NO ONE LOST STRIPS OR BARS NEXT DAY. NEIL, WE RETURNED TO TAY NINH ABOUT END FIRST WEEK OF JUL 68. WE REMAINED ASSIGNED TO 1ST BDE TILL I LEFT BDE S2 IN LATE JAN 68. I HATED TO LEAVE THE BN IN OCT BUT COL NEILSON WAS LEAVING AND DID NOT KNOW HIS REPLACEMENT. I WAS TIRED OF BEING SHOT AT AND BLOWN UP AND MY BEST FRIEND WAS JUST KIA, CPT HANK PHILLIPS CO C. PROBABLY THE BEST COMPANY CDR THE BN HAD. BUT, I WANTED OUT.

AS IT TURNED OUT A PREVIOUS AQUANTENCE OF MINE MAJ AL BUTLER, THEN LTC HAD CONTACTED MG WILLAMSON, DIV CDR, ON HIS WAY IN TO VN ABOUT AN INF BN JOB. GEN WILLAMSON GAVE HIM THE 4/23 M AS BUTLER HAD WORKED FOR WILLIAMSON IN THE 173 ABN BDE. I WOULD LIKED TO HAVE WORKED WITH HIM BUT, SEE ABOVE.

NEIL, I BUILT THE CLOCK WHEN YOU ONLY EXPECTED THE TIME. I'M SHARING ALL THIS AS MY DYSLEXIA HAS GROWN WORSE. I'VE HAD IT ALL MY LIFE AND HAD A DIFFICULT TIME LEARNING SENTENCE STRUCTURE, NOUNS, VERBS, ETC IN GRADE SCHOOL. SPELLING IS A GREAT FAILURE AND HAS BECOME WORSE. THE ARMY DIAGNOSED ME AT WAL REED ON MY RETIREMENT. ALSO THE NEUROLOGIST TELL ME THAT TWO HARD HITS TO THE HEAD, PCHT AND ONE VC LAND MINE UNDER THE 14 TRACK PLUS THE CHEMICALS FOR BYPASS SURG IN 86 HAVE NOW LEAD TO REAL POOR, SHORT AND LONG TERM MEM LOSS. MANY TIMES AT THE END OF THE DAY I AM AT A LOSS TO SPELL MY OWN NAME. THIS MESSAGE IS ALL THE PROOF ONE NEEDS.

MY PURPOSE IS GET SOME THOUGHTS ON THE RECORD BEFORE TOO LATE. NO SYMPATHY NEEDED, WARRANTED OR WANTED. MUCH MORE TO SAY BUT CAN'T. HOPE TO SEE MANY FRIENDS AT SEATTLE IN SEP. DOC JOHN WOODS WITH GEORGE COMPTON AND BILL D RECENTLY OF ESPN FAME ARE COORDINATING THE REUNION FOR CO C AND DOC JOHN IS IN DISCUSSION WITH THE NEW BN CDR TO LET US RIDE THE STRYKERS. THE MAN HAS CLOUT! BN MEMBERS LET'S GET BACK. MY THANKS TO DONN MAC FOR LOCATING ME IN THE BOONIES AND GETTING ME IN TOUCH W EACH OF YOU!

BEST EVER TO EACH AND YOUR FAMILIES, CAIN B OF CO C. FIFTY EIGHT DAYS SHORT OF GLORY.

PS. COL NEILSON, REF AUG FIGHT IN TAY NINH CITY. AFTER DIV DID NOT GIVE CLEARANCE FOR AIR OR OUR DS BTRY TO FIRE IN SUPPORT OF THE BN IN TAY NINH, I CRANKED UP THE 4.2. MORTARS, AFTER YOU RETURNED FOR FUEL. THEY HAD JUST RETURNED FROM THE QUARRY, AND I WISHED TO HEAR THEIR ROAR. I SHUT THEM OFF WHEN YOU RADIOED YOU WERE BACK UP. YOU HAD A LOT MORE TO LOOSE THAN ME.

*(prev email all caps from Cain Bridgman)*  
CAIN

Feb 17, 2012

*John, I connect regularly with Terry Bohlinger and when he came thru Chicago. I picked him up and brought him home awhile back. I e-mailed Terry about the Ap Cho dates because I recalled leaving Cu Chi during the afternoon(12th?) and nobody knew we were going into a hellhole (it was supposed to be a simple sweep)and return to the base camp. We assaulted just before dusk and I was dismounted. I didn't catch anything the first day but we got the recall and moved back for the nite. The next day(13th?) again on foot with the tanks interspersed (3rd of 4th Cav.?) we went in and we got just a little further in. One of our guys named Spears from Billings Montana was behind a track and got his legs ran over when the fallback order came. With all the smoke and noise nobody noticed him lying out there. He looked at me and there was no way I could leave him there, I just thought what if I were him. I was terrified because I was in front of our line dragging him back. As I was dragging him I caught a small piece of shrapnel in the right arm. After getting back a black medic saw it was small, wrapped it with a bandage & asked me if I wanted to stay on because we had a lot of casualties. I thought no but I said yes. The next morning(14th?) after a sleepless nite of the 8" guns firing. our track was down to 3 guys: Cruz the driver, Hartison in the back hatch and lucky me in the cupola. I was paranoid I wrapped a flak jacket around my legs as I stood on top of the 50 boxes as always.*

*They let us get in a little bit then – wham - .the side of the pc sounded like raindrops on a tin roof and someone from the right front kept pinging them off the right bevel of the cupola, I was firing the 50 looking from under when it something hit the barrel? I got 4 more small pieces in 2 fingers and my thumb and my left arm. 1 piece (larger)popped my helmet band and comically my camo cloth started to come down in front of my face. You treated me on the 15th, 16th, 4<sup>th</sup> March and 5<sup>th</sup> March. It took longer to heal because on the 25<sup>th</sup> Feb, Myers wrote that my suture line was ripped from heavy lifting on a detail. I will reply more tomorrow. Thanks again for all the H2O2 [Peroxide?], dry dressing and wound cleaning.  
Donn M (?)*

Dec 25, 2013

Neil,

*I highlighted the paragraph where they used the eight inch howitzer and pounded the enemy fortifications all night long on the 13th with little of us sleeping with the noise and knowing we were going back in the next day. The pictures I sent to you last week with the before and after pictures verify that the enemy had built concrete bunkers and were firing 51 cal machine guns on tripods at us. We pulled several 51 calibers out of the bunkers at the end with ropes tied around them.  
A day I'll never forget!  
Brock*

\* \* \* \* \*



**4<sup>TH</sup>Battalion 23<sup>rd</sup> Inf (M)** received the Valorous Unit Award for action during the Tet Counteroffensive, 30 January 1968-1 April 1968

\* \* \* \* \*

**On 8 March, 1968, Freddie J. Bryant of A Co was Killed in Action.**

\* \* \* \* \*

**OPERATION WILDERNESS** (11 March – 8 April 1968) The mission of the 25th Infantry Division in Op WILDERNESS was to continue activities associated with YELLOWSTONE along the Cambodian border northwest of Tay Ninh. The plan for WILDERNESS envisioned the security of allied base camp areas in the N Division TAOI with emphasis on protecting TAY NINH base camp, TAY NINH city, DAU TIENG base camp, DAU TIENG city, BAU CO and FSB ST. BARBARA near BAU CO. The plan also envisioned security of the MSR's connecting these military and civilian complexes. 25<sup>th</sup> Division began WILDERNESS on 11 Mar with the 1st Bde committed with three maneuver Bns and supporting combat support elements. **Task Force 4-23 (Mech)** also participated in WILDERNESS in conjunction with its participation in QUYET THANG.

The 199th Light Inf Brigade, an independent II Field Force brigade with two organic battalions, 3/7<sup>th</sup> Inf and 4/12<sup>th</sup> Inf became OPCON 25th Infantry Division on 31 March and participated in WILDERNESS until its completion. In addition to its two organic battalions, the 199th Bde had operational control of the 2/12<sup>th</sup> Inf and A/3/17<sup>th</sup> Cav.

The final results of WILDERNESS: US losses: 26 KIA, 155 WIA (103 Evac), four APCs, four helicopters, 18 trucks, four trailers and one duster damaged: four APCs and two trucks destroyed. Enemy losses: 274 KIA, four PWs, 61 detainees, 150 rounds of small arms ammo, five individual and one CSW, 9.2 tons rice, 27 lbs documents and one motorcycle captured. five tons of rice, 20 mines, 37 sampans, one cluster bomb, 90 grenades, 1150 rds small arms ammo and 18 rocket, mortar or arty rds destroyed. A total of 289 Tac Air sorties were flown in support.

**OPERATION QUYET THANG** (11 March – 7 April 1968)

1. OPERATION QUYET THANG,
2. BINH DUONG and HAU NGHIA, TAY NINH and DINH PROVINCES, Republic of Vietnam.
3. 110001 March 1968 - 082400 April 1968
4. Control Headquarters: 2d Bde, 25th Inf Div.
5. Reporting Officer: Colonel Raymond O. Miller
6. Task Orientation:

1st Battalion, 27th Infantry	LTC ERNEST F. CONDINA
2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry	LTC WINFRED G. SKELTON
1st Battalion, 5th Infantry (M)	LTC THOMAS C. LODGE
2nd Battalion, 34th ARMOR	LTC JOHN H. TIPTON JR.
4th Battalion, 23rd Infantry (M)	LTC AVERY S. FULLERTON
2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry	LTC ALFRED M. BRACY
1st Battalion, 8th Artillery	LTC ROBERT A.M. DEAN

Intel on Enemy OOB:

	<u>UNIT</u>	<u>STRENGTH</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>
-	1ST MR-4 VC Inf Bn	240	XT 8403
	2d Go Mon VC Inf Bn	290	XT 8403
	7th Cu Chi VC LF Inf Bn	245	XT 5716
	27th VC Regt	900	XT 8005
	272d VC Regt	900	XT 8008
	8th VC Arty Bn	230	XT DISPERSED
(Enemy OOB (cont))			
	D -16 VC LF Bn	200	XT 6101
	267th VC Inf Bn	200	XT 5600
	269th VC Inf Bn	150	XT 5600
	506th VC Inf Bn	175	XT 4603

This operation gave 25th Infantry Division the mission to conduct combined Operations with GVN forces to destroy NVA/VC within CMD, HAU NGHIA and BINH DUONG Provinces, and to maintain ability to reinforce Tan Son Nhut air base with mechanized or armored forces. QUYET THANG was a combined II Field Force and II / III RVN Corps operation designed to clear enemy forces from Saigon and environs, and to restore RVN control of the area following the TET Offensive.

After the NLF's Tet Offensive failure, about ten enemy units attempted to withdraw thru 25th Inf Division's TAOR to reinforce and resupply. The QUYET THANG counteroffensive phase was drawn up and on 11 March, 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division's infantry, armor and artillery began the largest combined operation of the war (so far) covering all of III CTZ. In addition to US 25th Inf Div, US 1st and 9th Divisions also participated, as did the ARVN 5th and 25th Divisions, the RVN Abn Division and RVN Marine Task Force. The US 25<sup>th</sup> Division began with 2nd and 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigades, and **one task force, TF 4-23rd (Mech)**, committed. **TF 4-23 (Mech)** operated concurrently between QUYET THANG and WILDERNESS which also began 11 March. For both ops, **TF 4-23<sup>rd</sup> Inf (M)** had the mission of road security between CU CHI, TAY NINH and DAU TIENG. The task org of 2nd and 3rd Bde, and **TF 4-23 (Mech)** remained the same for QUYET THANG until it ended 7 Apr. [See Avery Fullerton interview comments below.]

On 12 March, 2/22d Infantry captured 5,000 lbs of rice. This set the pattern: caches, bunkers and base camps were found in abundance, and fewer Charlies. C/3/17<sup>th</sup> Air

Cav found 3/4 ton trucks by helicopter when they followed fresh tracks leading from Cambodia toward Dau Tieng. C Troop marked the trucks, which were the first found in RVN, and called in air strikes and artillery to destroy them and their cargo of ammo, producing 150-foot high pillars of smoke and flame.

On 14 March, 2/14th Infantry found a major cache of small arms in Ho Bo Woods. Two days later they found another, including 120 82mm mortar rds and 12 complete 122mm rockets. In another eight days, on 24 March, they found Charlie. Two Companies air assaulted and came under AW fire from enemy entrenched in hedgerows near Sa Nho village, 8 mi northwest of Cu Chi. The Golden Dragons returned fire, called in air strikes and helo gunships, and then moved in on the enemy (7th Cu Chi VC Inf Bn,) killing 66 and capturing two. Villagers said there had been as many as 400 VC in the village.

On 16 March 68 the 4<sup>th</sup> Bn, /9<sup>th</sup> Infantry stopped a woman with no ID card carrying 6,000 piasters. After concluding she was carrying a VC payroll, 4/9<sup>th</sup> detained the suspect and confiscated the money. It is not known which VC unit near Ap Hiep Thuan missed their payday. **4<sup>th</sup> Bn 23rd Inf (M) Recon Plt** engaged in limited S&Ds and road sweeps between Cu Chi Base and Trang Bang, NW on QL-1, and to Hoc Mon Bridge. The road had to be kept open for convoys, which had increased in both frequency and size.

**On 21 March, Terrence J Bellomo of Charlie Co was KIA.**

**On 24 March 68, John B. Reale of Charelie Co was Killed In Action.**

On 25 March, **4/23rd Inf (M)** became OPCON to 2nd Bde after making contact with elements of an est enemy battalion, later identified as 7th LF Cu Chi Bn. At 1120 hrs Co C 1-5 INF (M) and **Co C 4<sup>th</sup>/23rd INF (M)** were committed to assist **4-23 INF (M) (-)** in their contact at Trang Bang, vic XT523187. More detail under Battle of Trang Bang (below).

Same day, **2d Sect Recon Plt/4/23rd** began its usual sweep from Cu Chi to Trang Bang, while the **1st section** swept south to Hoc Mon Bridge. Each section consisted of 4 APCs ("Vipers") and a 7 men from 6th Engrs. **A Co, 4<sup>th</sup> Bn, 23<sup>rd</sup> Inf (M)**, was working the area around Trang Bang Bridge, approx 1500 meters south of Trang Bang. Shortly before 0800, Recon was about 1100 meters south of **Alpha's** lines when they encountered one of 5 battalions of 271 NVA Regiment, apparently intent on encircling **Alpha Company** with 2500 men & wiping them out. **2d Recon Sect** of 19 men and 4 APCs were now blocking the way of an NVA battalion attempting to cross QL-1 to cut it to prevent reinforcement, as well as to close the ambush circle.

In a brief but intense firefight, **Recon** found that its exposed position on the highway and small numbers would prevent maneuvering. Still, they managed to maneuver before the tide turned against them. With odds of 26 to 1, **2nd Sect** inflicted severe casualties on the NVA while facing being overrun. Two APCs were out of action (one burning) and many wounded. They remounted and broke out to Alpha's position near the bridge. Those not able to mount the APCs made their move

toward **Alpha** in the far-side ditch. Both APCs were disabled by RPGs and recoilless rifle and additional **Recon** members were WIA.

The battle raged for hours with arty and airstrikes called in to break up the NVA attack. When the battle ended, **4<sup>th</sup> Bn 23rd Inf** had held its ground and remained operational. The 271st NVA Regt did not. QL-1 was open as usual on Mar 26th, just as it had been on the 24th! The US had lost six KIA and 11 WIA, and 2d Sect Recon's four APCs plus 65th Engrs vehicles. The awards presented for this action were: one Distinguished Service Cross, 6 Silver Stars, 10 Bronze Stars with "V" and 16 Purple Hearts. They were credited with 175 NVA killed and an uncounted number of enemy wounded.

**BATTLE OF TRANG BANG (24 – 25 March 68)** Info From Official Records: At 0814, 2 Co's of 2/14<sup>th</sup> Inf were engaged by an enemy force SE E of Sa Nho II village in Northern Cu Chi District, Hau Nghia Province. The Bn was conducting combat assaults into suspected enemy locations and was engaged on the first landing zone.

Sa Nho village had long been suspected as enemy dominated. Several known enemy LOC pass near the village and agent reports indicated this to be a commo - liaison station responsible for troop movement into central Hau Nghia Prov. Sa Nho is on the S edge of Ho Bo Woods, W of Filhol. Several weeks before contact, TF 2/34<sup>th</sup> Armor found large food caches there and had sporadic contact with small elements. Agent reports placed several Co-size units vic the village. After contact made on 24 March, 2/14 Inf moved further in and met heavier resistance from well armed enemy in prepared positions in hedgerows. The battle lasted until 0230 with results: 14 US KIA, 45 US WIA, 66 VC KIA (BC), 21 VC KBA (BC), 7 VC KIA (POSS), 2 VC PW, 4 LPO - 50 portable flame throwers, one 7.62 AA machine gun, one US M-1 carbine, one RPD LMG and ten AK47's.

Interrogated civilians said there had been 300 - 400 VC in the village starting 19 March, and they forced the villagers to construct fighting positions and bunkers. The cadre included a major and four captains, dressed in mixed green and khaki uniforms with bands of white fabric on the left wrists. Documents found in the contact area indicated 7th Cu Chi LF Bn. The two PWs were of little use as one was too badly injured to be interrogated and the other was an enemy worker for only a short time. The enemy appeared to be well trained/ disciplined and good fighting quality.

25 March: Elements of **4<sup>th</sup> Bn, 23<sup>rd</sup> Inf (Mech)** were engaged by unknown size force southeast of Trang Bang. These VC, dressed in mixed uniforms, carried web gear, and wore tan canvas pith helmets, well equipped and armed. The main difference between the action of 25th compared to 24th was that discipline and combat ability of VC on the 2nd day was poor. They broke and ran on several occasions and, showed none of the combat skill of previous day. Among the dead were two women, both had been carrying RPG-2 RL. US troops saw other women fighting that day. Documents indicated contact with D245; and D246 Bns. These apparently were infiltrator groups rather than functional Bns. They infiltrated from North Vietnam, crossing into and entered RVN on about 1 March. They moved into Trang Bang about 22 March. These groups were subordinate to 9th Regiment, 250th NVA

Training Div. It appeared that they were filler personnel for 9th VC Division. Results of action on 25 March: ten US KIA, 47 US WIA, 111 VC KIA (BC), 16 VC KBA (BC), 100 VC KIA (POSS), two VC PW, three 7.62 MG captured, one RPD - LNG, one Chicom 30 cal machine gun, 21 AK47's, six 6 RPG-2 RLs, and one RPG - 2 launcher.

**4th Bn 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Tomahawks Killed In Action this day were: Lloyd A. Colfack, HHC; Eugene J. Curless, C Co; David E. Dewitt, and Larry M. Gronewald, of HHC; Tracy W. Hargrave, C Co; John L. Higgins, B Co; Roy L. Johnson, HHC; Monte C. Kinasz, Michael L. Pfeffer; and William L. Ray, HHC.** All names are noted in the Coffelt Database as location "Trang Bang Bridge - Football Field."

On 26 March 68 the Golden Dragons and the Dreadnoughts pursued the remnants of the infiltration units, and, by early afternoon, were again engaging the enemy. Artillery, air and infantry assaults routed the VC, who lost another 108 KIA. **4-23 INF: (Mech) Co's A, B and Recon platoon** conducted sweep of vic XT498194, and sweep and clearing operations of Highway 1 from XT411238 to Cu Chi Base Camp. At 1300 hrs. **Recon**, vic XT510189, located 9 VC KIA (BC). At 1458 hrs **Recon platoon**, vic XT508191, apprehended one male WIA detainee.

**On 27 March, Louis W. Hamil of HHC and Steven J. Gaflunik of C Co were Killed in Action.**

**28 Mar Recon conducted sweep at XT498194 and cleared Rte 1 to Cu Chi Base.** At 1300 located 9 BC KIA (BC.)

**On 3 April 1968, Willie Shelton of C Co and Ronald L. Zach of HHC were Killed In Action. Database location shows "Ho Bo Woods."**

**On 7 April, Jerry F. Lentz, A Co was KIA.**

In April, the **4/23d Infantry (Mech)** made significant contact with a well dug-in NVA Bn. Joined by the 3/39th ARVN Regt, the Tomahawks fought fiercely for two days. Supported by arty and TAC Air, **4/23rd (M)** forced the NVA to break contact just outside of Duc Hoa. A sweep yielded 99 NVA dead, 31 AWs and seven crew-served weapons. For outstanding performance, Gen William Westmoreland personally wrote **4/23d Inf** a congratulatory message, citing the Battalion's courage and valor.

**NEW CAMPAIGN: COUNTEROFFENSIVE PHASE IV 2 APRIL 1968 -- 30 JUNE 1968**

\* \* \* \* \*

**4<sup>th</sup> Bn 23<sup>rd</sup> Inf (M) INFANTRY BASE MOVES TO TAY NINH** In April, 1968 (see e-mail below following) **4<sup>th</sup> Bn 23<sup>rd</sup> Inf (M)** moved its base from Cu Chi where it had been for two years, to Tay Ninh West along with the rest of 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade. The previous tenants of the base were 196<sup>th</sup> Light Infantry Brigade, who had been moved north to Chu Lai, where they joined the newly forming 23<sup>rd</sup> (Americal) Division. The move occurred on or about approx 13-14 April 1968, according to Alpha Co morning reports for the month.

\* \* \* \* \*

Final results of QUYET THANG: US losses: 50 KIA, 396 WIA (289 Evac.), 9 tanks, 18 APCs, 7 trucks and 4 Rome Plows damaged. One helicopter, 9 APCs and 2 trucks destroyed.

Enemy losses: 729 KIA, 96 detained and 36 PWs, 234 individual and 37 crew served weapons, 62.6 tons of rice, 273 lbs of documents, 5 radios, 5.2 tons of salt, 21018 SA rds, 54 rockets and 1 Russian aiming circle captured: 1471 rocket, mortar or artillery rds, 10.2 tons rice, 1933 hand grenades, 19413 SA rds, 3.5 tons of salt, 230 mines, 69 sampans, 3 bombs, 749 lbs documents, 5 CSW, 105 cluster bomblets, 1 truck, 1 radio, 16 IWs and 300 crates of ammo destroyed. 312 TAC AIR sorties were flown.

\* \* \* \* \*

In addition to rooting Charlie [VC] out, an objective was to neutralize part of the "rocket belt" around Saigon, and ease the 122mm rocket threat to Tan Son Nhut Air Base. Even though the VC tried to keep well clear of 3rd Brigade units, 153 were KIA and 10 POW after 35 engagements. The chief blow landed by 3rd Brigade, however, was the food, ammo and shelter lost by the enemy. As the Op began, a task force from  $\frac{3}{4}$  Cavalry found a cache of 1,500 lbs of rice. On 13 March a Co of 3/22nd Infantry found twelve 122mm rockets buried in a dike, and the next day a task force headed by  $\frac{3}{4}$  Cavalry drove about 20 VC from an entrenched position in a small but hot firefight. Charlie lost 11,000 lbs of peanuts, 12,000 lbs of peas, 16,000 lbs of rice, and 10,000 lbs of salt. He was even short 100 lbs canned tuna. Every shelter and bunker in the path of 3rd Brigade's thrust was destroyed. QUYET THANG continued another 12 days to 7 April with no more significant contacts.

\* \* \* \* \*

(a.) OBSERVATION: It is extremely rare in Vietnam when an individual manning an M-16, M-79, M-60 or 50 Caliber who will carry the basic load prescribed. Normally they carry three or four times the basic load.

(b.) EVALUATION: The situation and ammo usage should be analyzed and new basic load standards set.

(c.) RECOMMENDATION: That a larger basic load of ammo be prescribed.

\* \* \* \* \*

Info From Official Records: INTELLIGENCE. a. Op QUYET THANG was conducted in Hau Nghia Province and west Gia Dinh Province. The terrain there is primarily dry, hard rice paddies interspersed with bamboo hedgerow complexes. In the north, the paddies gradually fade away into the Rome Plowed entanglements of the Ho Bo and Filhol Plantation areas. During this period, the weather was hot and dry and imposed no operations difficulties on combat ops in the area.

The enemy order of battle in the initial stages of QUYET THANG consisted primarily of main force (MF) and NVA units that had taken part in the enemy TET offensive in the Saigon area. These units were attempting to disengage and move to base areas to reinforce and resupply. Unit stability was effected as the VC/NVA found it necessary to break down into small units in order to achieve this disengagement.

This use of small unit exfiltration resulted in only scattered contact during the early stages of the operation. The enemy attempted to cover their withdrawal from the Saigon area with harassing attacks against RF-PF outposts, primarily along National Highway 1. In addition, minor attempts at harassment of movement along the MSR through the use of mines and roadblocks were attempted.

The mission of the 25th Inf Division in QUYET THANG was to conduct combined operations with GVN to destroy NVA/VC forces within the CMD, HAU NGHIA and BINH DUONG Provinces, and to maintain the capability to reinforce Tan Son Nhut air base with mechanized or armored forces. Op QUYET THANG was a combined II Field Force and II and III RVN Corps op designed to clear enemy forces from Saigon and its environs, and to restore RVN control of the area in the wake of the enemy TET Offensive.

In addition to 25th Inf Division in this op, US 1st and 9th Inf Div's also participated with ARVN 5th and 25th Inf Divisions, RVN Abn Division and RVN Marine TF. 1st Brigade US 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division began TOAN THANG 7 April 68 with two Bn's (4/9<sup>th</sup> Inf, 3/22<sup>nd</sup> Inf). 2nd Brigade began with 4 Bns: (1/27<sup>th</sup> Infantry; 2/27<sup>th</sup> Infantry; 1/5<sup>th</sup> Infantry(Mech); and 2/14<sup>th</sup> Inf.) 3rd Brigade operated with 4 Battalions: (2/22<sup>nd</sup> Infantry (Mech); **4/23rd Infantry (M)**; 2/34<sup>th</sup> Armor; and 3/4 Cavalry).

[ Some major firepower! – ed.] The 199th Light Infantry Brigade continued OPCON to 25th Infantry Division initially with 3 Battalions: (3/7<sup>th</sup> Infantry, 4/12<sup>th</sup> Infantry;, and 2/12<sup>th</sup> Infantry.)

**Again quoting LTC Fullerton's exit interview,** "Then there was a big battle in Trang Bang on the 25<sup>th</sup> of March . . . This was held by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade to be part of a longer battle that actually ran from about the 24<sup>th</sup> to the 26<sup>th</sup> of March, but we were only involved on the 25<sup>th</sup> and when it was reported that two or three enemy battalions converged on Trang Bang. This attack started about 6:00 AM with an attack on an RF post . . . and eventually developed into a considerable sized battle held out in the town of Ap Binh (?) on the eastern side of Trang Bang, which terminated about 4 PM. The battle down at Tan Phu Trung resulted in something over 100 VC body count and the Trang Bang battle was 85." (Interview (p.9)

\* \* \* \* \*

26 March: Elements of 2/14th Infantry and TF 2/34th Armor combined to pursue enemy forces N. At Ap Long Mac (XT528249), contact was again made with units of previous days contact. Action continued until afternoon 27 March. Documents indicated D245 and infiltration groups were present, as well as elements of 271st Regiment, 9th VC Division. Results:: two US KIA, 43 US WIA, 62 VC KIA (BC), 56 VC KBA (BC), 12 VC KIA (POSS), one VC PW, six AK47's, five RPD LMG, one RPG, two RL, one 60mm mortar, two US M -1's.

Several conclusions drawn: It was evident that elements of 9th VC Division moved from Saigon Area to just north and southwest of Trang Bang. Documents picked up after contact, as well as interrogation of VC PWs indicated presence of 9th Div's 271st Regt north of Trang Bang and 272nd Regt southwest along Vam Co Dong. These Regts moved in to resupply and gain replacements. Believed that two infiltration groups D245 and D246 were to provide replacements for 9th Div, but were intercepted prior to entry into Regts. These troops were unfamiliar with area as they had arrived only two days previous. These troops were neither well trained, nor disciplined. This appeared to be their first exposure to battle. The NVA apparently are having to dig deep into their manpower pool to keep units in the S up to strength. It is doubtful they are getting sufficient training to be combat effective. Also, they appear to be placing women in combat ranks. Seven to eight women were seen in the fight along R-1. These indicate a pressing replacement problem.

Large losses suffered has reduced the effort to bring 9th VC Division to strength. Engagement of 7th Cu Chi LF Bn by US 2/14<sup>th</sup> Infantry resulted in severe reduction of enemy's combat effectiveness. Prior to this, unit strength was carried by II Field Force as 250 & marginally combat effective. Losses suffered 24 - 25 March, 1968 would put strength at 150, and non-combat effective.

That VC forces have received large amounts of good equipment is now clearly established. Local force units now carry AK47's, RPG rocket launchers, and flame throwers. The D245 and D246 groups were known to have 82mm mortars, 75mm RR and 1 radio per Company. This has resulted in a corresponding shift in combat effectiveness. The VC can now out-gun most ARVN units of equal size. The VC will provide a more formidable force, especially against allied units. This will pose a critical problem in the defense of RF/PF outposts, and in the morale of troops defending these outposts.

\* \* \* \* \*

*emails*

*Nov 10, 02*

*Happy Vets Day Everyone -- I have a question: How did it come about that the 23d wound up based in Tay Ninh and paired up with the 27th? I went over on the original boat and my only memories are of the 23d in the 1st Brigade, based at Cu Chi, paired up with the 14th and 9th.*



*Now this is admitting I didn't keep up with current events in very good detail at the time, but learning this from all the great messages and memories on-line has sort of messed up my reality, at least as far as my grasp on who was doing what, when, and where. Was the 23d based there (T.N.) until they came back to Hawaii, or did the 25th ever reconsolidate at Cu Chi? Isn't no big deal -- just messed with my mental pictures, so to speak. Neil*

*Nov 11, 2002*

*Hope everyone is enjoying their "Veterans' Day" holiday. I remember when we transferred to Tay Ninh in 1968. One nice shiny day shortly after TET, with the normal 150 degree temps, we did a "patrol" up the highway past Trang Bang. After searching peoples' houses along the road, we mounted up on our tracks and before you know it, we pulled into Tay Ninh base. Someone said welcome home boys. They didn't even tell us we were going there, much less staying. I guess that is the typical Army way. I remember we took turns over the next couple of weeks riding back and forth to Cu Chi, picking foot lockers and other personal items for the company, Alpha anyway. I don't know about the rest of the guys. Anyway, that is my memory of the move to Tay Ninh. Keep the faith my brothers. Steve H , Tomahawks, 1968*

*Jul 12, 2003*

*Rick & Neil as I remember it The battalion moved to Tay Ninh before Tet. The whole BN was moved to Saigon during Tet and moved back to Tay Ninh after it was no longer need in Saigon. Richard. 68/69*

*July 13*

*Richard and Little Doc, - I was with Charlie Company when they moved up to the Tay Ninh area and it was on or about 18 April 1968. I was left behind with Ray Burris as we were going home in a couple of days. John K C/4/23 4/67-4/68*

*Jul 13, 2003*

*Rick, -- I was with Battalion when they moved to Tay Ninh. I cannot give exact date, but our medical unit moved up during the first part of May ' 68. I believe everyone was in place by the middle to end of May. Little Doc HHC/C 67-68*

*July 18, 2003*

*Let me weigh in on this controversy about the actual move to Tay Ninh. I was Bravo16 B/Co during that period of time and can state that the actual move from Cu Chi to TN took place during the 1st two weeks of April 68. reason I know for sure is that I was wounded on a bridge sec mission outside of Trang Bang on March 24/25 and was medevac'd to 25th Med in Cu Chi. The Bn was still in Cu Chi. While recouping in rear area for 2 weeks the alert order came to move Bn to TN ASAP with the 1st Bde. it was during the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2 weeks of April that the Bn saddled up*

*and moved. I was convoy control off for B Co. Hope this helps you out. If you have any questions, e-mail me. Also Bill Bates was there during this time also.  
Jeff Hinkle*

*Nov 27, 03*

*If you want to know the EXACT date the 4/23rd moved to Tay Ninh it was the 18th of April 1968. How do I know this? I DEROSd the same day as the move. Hope this doesn't cause any problems.  
Brock ACo.67-68*

*Dec 22, 2010*

*Donn –*

*1. We were on line and chasing Charley (mopping up) and this little guy was in a spider hole with an AK...We could not dislodge him so I told a tanker (M60) that was opcon to us to do a pivot turn on the spider hole... Never saw the guy after that as the tank did a nice job eliminating his position...I think you and I talked about that incident over lunch?*

*2. We were in an assault southwest of Tan Son Nhut just before that night of pinning the gooks up against the swamp and the all night arty and gunships pinning them for the next day assault...Anyway my platoon was firing and maneuvering (I think your platoon was on our right flank and were doing the same, 1-6 would know as we were always on each other's flanks and felt good about that!) and just as we got out of the paddies and were no more than 15 meters from the hedgerow a Charley came up out of a spider hole directly to my front and threw a grenade at me... Dumb shit that I was I was carrying an M79 (where the hell was my CAR16 ?).. .I fired and dove backwards... Don't even remember that grenade going off.. .I called my tracks up to get 50's on the hedgerow and that is when SSgt. Maymi got KIA...*

*3. Can't remember where we were but think it was south of Duc Hoa when we found a cave... There was a bunch of wooden cases inside but don't remember what was in them... Kind of a strange and surreal cave as I had never seen one in TAOR before... Dark, dry and not real deep... We had a Kit Carson with us and it took about 15 to 20 minutes to talk the guy out of the cave... I think he was an officer as he had a really cool compass on him which continues to reside in my study... Anyway, we did toss some grenades in there and they kept coming back out so it was Willy Peter time... I tossed one in and then the Kit Carson began his chit chat to get the guy out... Guy came out without a burn on him.. AMAZING... Walked the guy back to where a chopper came in and took him to Cu Chi... Don't remember if we ever went back to the cave, I think not, as we tossed grenades in it before leaving... My best wishes to you my man!*

*Bill Bates (Bravo 2-6)*

*July 31, 2017*

*I have recently "transitioned" from an old but long-loved Toshiba to an HP, 'porting and/or deleting files.*

*I came across this tribute to then-LTC Glenn Otis, Sabre 6 that I posted 26 Feb 2013 on the death of then-LTG Glen Otis. He will always be remembered by the Tomahawks who were there as call sign "Sabre 6," CO, 3RD SQD/4th CAV REGT,*

*better known by those of us who were there as the "3/4 Horse", 25th Div.*

*PRELUDE to TRIBUTE*

*On May 27-28, the Tomahawks were in a blocking position just west of Saigon. we were in a blocking position against an anticipated NVA attack that night. I had commanded for 2 weeks and had as yet not heard a "shot fired in anger."*

*You choppered in and reminded me that we occupied your squadron's position during the Jan 1968 Tet attack (for which you were awarded the DSC). You told me that the NVA never seemed to learn to avoid repeating unsuccessful tactics and suggested I be especially watchful. You were correct. The NVA began their attack shortly after dark and continued until first light. Fires from battles in Cholon were sending columns of smoke into the sky behind us. Just after dark on the 27th listening posts detected movement outside one of our three night defensive perimeters. They made contact and a battle ensued that continued through the night, seemed to trail off toward morning and then flared up again with NVA inside the wire. All day we fought. The flame tracks took out the squad of NVA inside the wire, but the battle went on. A couple times during the day we had to be resupplied by air as we were running out of ammo. You guys know how much ammo a mech unit carries, so you know we were putting out a lot of firepower and we were getting as much as we gave. Of all the firefights I survived in Vietnam, I don't think I heard such sustained fire, a lot of it incoming, for so long a period of time. And there appeared no end in sight.*

*Then, late in the afternoon the 3/4 Cav came busting through the NVA lines and broke up the siege of our positions. Riding on the lead tank, standing next to the turret was LTC Glenn Otis (a West Point classmate of mine who went on to become a LTG). With one hand he was holding onto a handhold on the turret and with the other he was holding a radio handset. As they closed on our location he was shot through the hand. The siege of our position was broken and NVA began running away in the open. Daylong gunships and airstrikes had not pried them loose, but the 3/4 Cav did.*

*MY FAREWELL (posted upon notification of his death)*

*It was the afternoon of 27 May 1968, west of Tan Son Nhut airfield, and 4th BN (M), 23rd IN was in a blocking position against an anticipated NVA attack that night. I had commanded for 2 weeks and had as yet not heard a "shot fired in anger." You choppered in and reminded me that we occupied your squadron's position during the Jan 1968 Tet attack (for which you were awarded the DSC). You told me that the NVA never seemed to learn to avoid repeating unsuccessful tactics and suggested I be especially watchful. You were correct. The NVA began their attack shortly after dark and continued until first light. But then, uncharacteristically, the NVA remained in contact and continued to fight in the daylight. As the battle progressed, we began to run critically low of ammunition and suffered numerous casualties. Late in the afternoon, standing on your tank deck and holding on to the radio antenna, you led the 3rd SQ, 4th CAV to reinforce us. Combining now overwhelming forces, together we swept the field. As we advanced, you were shot, necessitating medical evacuation, never to return to "3/4 Horse." On occasion we used to relive that day in our lives, "in a time long ago, in a place now forgotten."*

*Now you're at peace. Rest well, brave classmate. Thanks for the assist. Until we meet at Fiddler's Green."*

*Mohawk 6*

\*

### **Background Info From Official Records:**

Background: TAY NINH PROVINCE is northwest of Saigon, bordered on the north, west, and southwest by CAMBODIA. It shares its south and east margins with HAU NGHIA, BIN DUONG, & BINH LONG Provinces. TAY NINH is the capitol of the province located about 99 km from Saigon and 25 km from Cambodia. In the southern half of the province, the country is characterized by rice paddy that's heavily flooded during the rainy season. The southeast quadrant is also flat with rice paddy, cultivated rubber plantations, and forests. The north half is flat jungle-dominated terrain. Its two seasons are the monsoon from May to December [wet and hot,] and dry season from January thru April [dry and hot.] The temperature varies from 70 F degree lows to 90+F degree highs thru the year.

A striking mountain, NUI BA Den, is approx 10 km northeast of Tay Ninh City. This mountain was a Viet Minh stronghold for years, and was now controlled by VC, except for the top, which was captured in 1964 and made a US communications site. North of the mountain is unpacified, and known as War Zone C. It is sparsely populated and the suspected location of COSVN HQs. Operations ATTLEBORO, BIRMINGHAM, JUNCTION CITY, YELLOWSTONE, and WILDERNESS had been some of the larger operations run here so far.

TAY NINH CITY is the center of the Cao Dai religion, with approx 200,000 followers of the province's 310,000 people. The sect once had an army of 50,000 and was a very influential group in the country. They are generally pro-GVN, but the NLF has tried to enlist their support. The Cao Dai are in the minority everywhere in RVN except Tay Ninh. The province's population is more than 70% Cao Dai, with proportional influence. The sect began on the E slopes of Nui Ba Den and the founders established a great temple and complex that made up the Holy See early this century. It bears features from Christianity, Buddhism and Islam. The main precept is that each man is responsible for his actions, that the actions are constantly observed from on high (hence the symbol of the gigantic eye) and that patience and virtue will be rewarded. Under such a concept, the sect has shunned an armed defensive force since the late 1950's in favor of a small contingent of unarmed Temple Guards.

Enemy troop strength is unknown but two Provincial Bn's, two Provincial Companies, and the local VC HQs is known to be in the area. Enemy have infiltrated from CAMBODIA west of the FISH HOOK to a staging area east of Katum, near the Saigon River, west of the Michelin Plantation and east of Soui Da. One route is via Cau Khoi Rubber Plantation, *Vo Cam Dong River, Renegade Woods, and into Angel's Wing. It is believed he intends to cut Route 22 near the Cau Khoi rubber plantation and isolate Tay Ninh from Saigon.*

\* \* \* \* \*

**ABRAMS IN – WESTMORELAND OUT**

But first, in March, 1968, Gen Creighton Abrams replaced Gen William Westmoreland as Commanding Gen MACV [COMUSMACV]. At around this time, the US strategy was also shifting toward “Vietnamizing” the conduct of the war away from primary reliance on US forces, and increasing emphasis on pacification, or “winning the hearts and minds” of the Vietnamese population at large. It also coincided with the peak U.S. strength at 534, 000.

From official history: The task of carrying out the military aspects of Vietnamization fell to General Creighton W. Abrams, who succeeded General Westmoreland as MACV commander On 22 March, when the latter returned to the United States to become Chief of Staff of the Army. Although Abrams had the aura of a blunt, hard-talking, World War II tank commander, he had spent a year as Westmoreland’s deputy, working closely with South Vietnamese commanders. [He had gained notoriety in the Battle of the Bulge]

From MACV The Joint Command In the Years of Withdrawal, 1968-1973: “On 31 Mar 1968, the US entered a prolonged period of transition in its conduct of the Vietnam War. The Johnson Admin devoted its last months to negotiating with the North Vietnamese and ultimately with the south Vietnamese ally about the terms under which . . . peace talks could begin. At the same time, the administration avoided new decisions on the conduct of the war in SVN. MACV, under Gen Creighton Abrams, Westmoreland’s successor, thus was left to reformulate its own operational concepts, guided only by the realization that no more American reinforcements were coming and that the administration wanted movement toward turning the war over to the South Vietnamese.

“At a press conference on 22 March, Pres Johnson made an announcement concerning high-level military commands. He declared that General Wheeler, whose tenure as chairman of the Joint chiefs of Staff was soon to end, and he would remain at that post for another year, an arrangement that would permit the next president to select his own chairman . . . At the same time, in accordance with plans of the previous year, Johnson announced that General Westmoreland would leave MACV in mid-summer to replace retiring Army Gen Harold K Johnson as Chief of staff.”

Historian Andrew Wiest described the change, “. . . Abrams changed the conduct of the conflict in several fundamental ways. Aiming at greater tactical flexibility, Abrams abandoned the politics of search and destroy and attrition and informed Johnson that, ‘We’ve got to go beyond smashing up the enemy’s main force unity. We have to do that selectively, but the way to get off the treadmill is to get after the infrastructure and guerillas.’ This is referred to as his “one war” strategy, “designed to blend traditional military efforts with increasing efforts at pacification, with a focus on smaller unit operations than heretofore, and dropping the division of labor between the US pursuing combat engagements and the South Vietnamese concentrating on pacification.

\* \* \* \* \*

Avery Fullerton briefly summarizes the period of his command in these excerpts of his exit interview: “. . .the battalion then for most of February and March was concerned with road security operations, which resulted in a number of very good sized contacts, particularly on the 13th and 14th of February, a couple of medium-sized ones in later February and early March, and then a big sized one at Trang Bang in March (p. 2) . . . . There were two major contacts during this period. One was the 13th -14th February when we fought a battalion of, I believe, the VC 271st Regt in the town of Ap Cho and Tan Phu Trung . . . This [enemy] battalion had been there about two weeks and was causing some minor problem, nothing very major. But it was finally decided it was time to eject them, so we ejected them in a two-day battle (p. 8).”

“Then there was a big battle in Trang Bang on the 25th of March. This was held by the 2nd Bde to be part of a longer battle that actually ran from about the 24th to 26th March, but we were only involved on the 25th and when it was reported that two or three enemy battalions converged on Trang Bang. This attack started about 6:00 AM with an attack on an RF post . . . and eventually developed into a considerable sized battle held out in the town of Ap Binh (?) on the eastern side of Trang Bang, which terminated about 4 PM. The battle at Tan Phu Trung resulted in something over 100 VC body count and the Trang Bang battle was 85”

“. . .in our case, the Phase 3 TET, if you want to call it that, started about the 23rd of April when we deployed into the vicinity of Dau Tre and placed in direct support of the 49th ARVN Regt. We had very frequent contact both at daytime and nighttime between the 23rd of April and the 15th of May, a period of about three weeks. I would say there were only about three days when we were not in contact – well, perhaps five days . . . we came up with a technique where they frequently would find the VC and then they would call us over to help fight them. We had contacts resulting in 47 killed, 42 killed, 28 killed, just daytime, nighttime. all kinds of contact . . . Recently, the contacts have been with NVA units more than VC main force and even the historic old VC battalions seem to be thoroughly filled with NVA fillers. And this is an advantage to us in some respects. The NVA are not nearly as good at getting away. And so as a consequence, if one gets them cooped up in a hedge row somewhere or finds them, it's possible to make, I think, much more effective use of supporting fires to extract and then do it the easy way. Now there was one example when we and Dreadnaught and Manchus were part of this battle and then later got sent someplace else, but where the 3 of us actually kept a good sized VC force cooped up for a matter of two or three days in a hedge row that was backed up against a swamp and I forget the body count . . . I think the final count was 182 . . .” (pp 9-11)

“The NVA forces seemed to be very well equipped with a great deal of new equipment, more machine guns, and absolutely no shortage that I was able to see of RPGs. All of this, the whole story then, would tend to incline you to use your supporting artillery more than if you were fighting the local force.” (pp. 11-12)

“. . . of course the first thing about the mech unit is the – at least the first thing that occurs to me – is the enormous amount of fire power that you can bring to bear on the enemy and the fact that you have great tactical mobility in them . . . in this recent fighting we, in many times, made long approach marches and were able to

close with the enemy that the ARVN and found maybe 10 or 15 km away from the place we started operations that day. Now in areas where there's woods or brush or reasonably good cover, and in particular I'm talking about RPGs, here in areas where he cannot get a real good shot at you with an RPG, it is sometimes acceptable and sometimes a good tactic to actually use the personnel carrier in a real fast dash, cavalry type tactics, to close with the position very rapidly and then dismount into the covered position. Normally the mech – U.S. doctrine for a mech unit considers the mech vehicle to be a carrier that brings you to the scene of a fight, but you don't fight from it. . . . [But] I feel very strongly that this tactic should not be used in hedge row fighting . . . the principal tactic is to keep the APC out of range of the RPGs . . .” (pp. 15-18)

\* \* \* \* \*

On 8 April, at the end of Op QUYET THANG, **4<sup>th</sup> Bn (Mech), 23<sup>rd</sup> Inf** was placed OPCON 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade from 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, 25<sup>th</sup> Div.

On 23 April, to meet this threat, 25<sup>th</sup> Inf Division executed a major redeployment of all but two maneuver Battalions to the south and southeast parts of its TAOI to block the main avenues of approach to the Saigon area from the west. 2/22<sup>nd</sup>(M) Infantry and 2/12<sup>th</sup> Infantry continued their Dau Tieng and Tay Ninh defense. All others assigned to 1<sup>st</sup> Bde, with the exception of **4<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Mechanized) 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry**, which was placed under 25<sup>th</sup> Divisional control.

**OPERATION TOAN THANG I** (12 April - 31 May 68) was mounted against the so-called “Enemy Second Offensive” in the Saigon-Cholon area, Tet being the First. It involved US, RVN, Australian and Thai armed forces. Up to then, it was the largest operation the conflict had known. No campaign showed more dramatically how 25<sup>th</sup> Division could take the war to the enemy's backyard than this one, which carried to the edges of the division's AO. One moment they probed the triple canopied fringes of War Zone C. The next they drew a tight cordon around Tan Son Nhut Air Base. They firmly stood their ground in the face of withering enemy assault in / around the extensive Michelin Rubber Plantation. Next they fought their way across hedgerows and rice paddies 5 miles south of Cu Chi Base where a desperate enemy was pinned against an impassable swamp. During these 54 days 3,542 enemy soldiers fell dead before Tropic Lightning.

[Ed note: as a sidebar to this period, records also indicate a “**Task Force Daems**” operating between 3 May and 25 May in Op TOAN THANG. Since Col Daems was Cmdg Officer 3<sup>rd</sup>, Bde, this may be shorthand for “3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade and other orgs OPCON to it.” Or, it may have existed as a separate task group with 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade still engaged in other named operations such as Yellowstone, Saratoga, etc.] still technically in progress. T F Daems is listed as comprising: 4<sup>th</sup> B, 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry; **4<sup>th</sup> Bn, 23<sup>rd</sup> Mech Infantry “Tomahawks”**; 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn, 34<sup>th</sup> Armor; Co C, 1<sup>st</sup> Bn, 5<sup>th</sup> Mech Inf (OPCON to 2/34<sup>th</sup> Armor), 11<sup>th</sup> Armored Cavalry Regiment; 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Bs, 22<sup>nd</sup> Infantry; and other orgs and support units as assigned. Organizational realignments in response to these intensified enemy operations were nothing if not “flexible.”

At 0420 hrs Good Friday morning, 11 Apr11, all hell broke loose for 3/22d Inf at a NDP in jungle, 13 miles north of Dau Tieng Base. An unknown number of mortar rounds fell on 3/22<sup>nd</sup> Infantry. As the incoming fire increased, a multi-Bn force of NVA attacked the perimeter at B Company's sector. The attack's intensity caused many to pull back from their original positions aided by arty, helicopter gun ships, and air strikes. 2/22d Infantry (Mech) worked its way through six km of jungle to reinforce 3/22<sup>nd</sup> Infantry. When the fighting subsided, the enemy fled, leaving 155 KIA. Sixteen US died and 47 were wounded.

**On 16 April, 1968 Ronald D. Hinson of HHC, 4<sup>th</sup> Bn 23<sup>rd</sup> Inf was Killed in Action**

Around 19 April, reliable intel sources provided indications that NVA/VC main force units would attempt a major attack on Saigon and environs on 1 May (Vietnam's Labor Day).

25 April saw five B-52 strikes on Ho Bo woods, with 17 VC KIA (BC) following 2/14<sup>th</sup> Inf contact with an enemy force..

On 26 Apr, **HHC Recon 4/23rd (M)** again found itself in the thick of intense fighting when they were attacked while setting up in a NDP. Despite suicidal human-wave attacks by the NVA, Recon held their ground until reinforced, with a total of 150 NVA killed. Recon was credited with nine killed and one PW. **Also, William R. Jennett of Alpha Co was KIA this day.**

On 28 Apr, following 49<sup>th</sup> ARVN Regt contact win an est VC company VIC XT549119, **4<sup>th</sup> Bn (23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry (M)** redeployed from its RIF location at XT4212 (4-digit) to the area of the ARVN contact, arriving at 1500H . It contacted an estimated VC Bn resulting in 22 VC KIA (BC); US 7 KIA, and 30 US WIA. **Among the US killed were James D. Cain, Robert Glenn Jr, William H. Hollmen, and Pedro Maymi Martinez all of Bravo Co; and Luis R. Munoz of Alpha Co.**

April 29 saw that contact continued, encountering a bunker complex west of Cu Chi at XT545117 at 1230 hrs. The enemy was fixed in place with organic weapons, helo gunships, artillery and TAC AIR resulting in a further 33 enemy KIA (BC), and numerous captured weapons. 33 VC were KIA (BC); 15 AK-47 rifles, 5 carbines, and 3 RPG rocket launchers captured. **US Killed in Action included : Walter K. Clarke, James A. Hering, Andrew J. Jobey, Huriel L. Moore, , and Clifford F. Tyson all of HHC.**

**On 30 April, 1968, Donald R. Johnson and Jack A. Whetsel (Lt) of Bravo Co, and Edward L. Perry of HHC were Killed In Action.**

May 2 brought two more Tomahawks **KIA: Donald D Randall Jr (Lt), Charlie Company, and Allen D Rowles, of HHC.**



On 3 May enemy units moved within the division TAOI into assault positions for their planned attacks, becoming more apparent, and the division reacted accordingly. At 1000 hours, B Troop, 3/17th Air Cav, continuing its armed aerial recon E of ORIENTAL RIVER, sighted an estimated 200 VC at XT598068. This enemy force was engaged by the gunships and artillery, and tactical fighter air strikes were directed into the area. **4th Bn, 23rd Inf (Mech)** which was maneuvering on a S&D operation a short distance to the S of the enemy position was directed to engage. By 1040 hrs the Bn had moved into blocking positions along an axis from XT5906(4-digit) to XT5904. This maneuver fixed the enemy position, and by 1520 hours, **4th of the 23rd (M)** was reinforced by the 2nd Battalion, 34th Armor, 4th Bn 9th Inf, and later 1 troop of the 11th ACR. That night and for three more days the Task Force, with DIVARTY support, helo gun ships, and Air Force TAC fighters, kept on them and accounted for 285 NVA dead.

4 May, at 1730H, **A Co, 4th Bn, 23rd Inf (Mech)** sweeping approx. four km NE of DUC HOA received fire from an unknown number of enemy at XS623987. The company attacked into the position and accounted for **15 enemy dead** and one POW. This enemy force was determined to be an element of the 273rd VC Regt.. **US KIA's included Stanley C Banks, Samuel T. Neil Jr, and Jerry Lennon of Alpha Co, and Donald E Slater of Charlie Co** at a location given as 4K NE Duc Hoa.

On 6 May, **TASK FORCE DAEMS** completed its operations against the enemy force in the vic XT6005, XT6006, XT6105 and XT5907. 4/9<sup>th</sup> Inf and 1/5<sup>th</sup> Inf (M) swept through the area during the day and discovered 113 additional enemy dead and substantial numbers of enemy weapons, ammunition and supplies. The total enemy casualties by body count in the four day engagement was 213 dead. From five prisoners taken in the battle, it was learned that the enemy force intercepted and blocked by TASK FORCE DUNLOP - DAEMS consisted of a Bn of 271st VC Regt and that the survivors of the engagement, many of them wounded, had fled N through the swamp. As the 4/9<sup>th</sup> and 1/5<sup>th</sup> prepared for their mopping up activities for the day, TASK FORCE DAEMS sent the **4th Bn, 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry**, and 2/34<sup>th</sup> Armor S into vic of BOA TRAI to reinforce the ARVN - RF-PF garrison of that town which was attacked by a three Bn enemy force (the 267B, 267 and D-16 VC Bns) in the early morning. At XT4805 the **4/23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry (Mechanized)** closed with an enemy unit at 0730. Supported by helicopters and arty, the Bn accounted for 44 enemy dead and captured one prisoner in an all day running battle to the W of BOA TRAI. **Killed In Action were Dennis Premock, Wilbur E. Smith Jr., and Milton E. Spears all of HHC.**

**On 8 May 1968, Samuel P. Beauford and David S. Easton of Bravo Company, and Thomas J. Lansden of HHC (?) were Killed In Action.**

Other action is mentioned around Bao Tre in the Task Force Daems After Action report (covering 3 May to 25 May). **4 Bn (M) 23rd Inf** participating prominently. No date is mentioned.

At 0300, the morning of 9 May, **FSB MAURY** at XT618022 came under a heavy mortar and rocket attack followed by a Bn size ground assault. **A Co** and **Scout Plt of 4<sup>th</sup> Bn, 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry (M)** which were securing the artillery positions were reinforced by the battalion's B Co and I Troop, 3/11<sup>th</sup> Cav and raced for FSB Maury. According to the Divarty report, "Avery Fullerton's **4<sup>th</sup> Bn, 23<sup>rd</sup> Inf (M)**" arrived in a headlong response at 0530. In a fight that lasted until 0600, US casualties were nine KIA and 68 wounded. Additionally two 105mm and two 155mm howitzers were destroyed by sappers who had breached the perimeter. 14 enemy KIA were counted next morning and one POW was taken. **Killed this day were Lester W. Cox of Charlie Co and Charlie C. Flores of HHC. Flores noted "4km NE Duc Hoa City."**

Summary Info From Other Official Records: Operation TOAN THANG continued from last quarter. The forces deployed to the CMD were successful in spoiling an all out May Day attack on Saigon. Approx two enemy Bns, unable to consummate their attack on the capital, were trapped in the swamps to the SW of Highway 1 near Duc Hoa. During the period 3 - 5 May over 10,000 rds of arty were poured into the area inflicting heavy casualties on the combined VC/NVA forces. During the early morning of 9 May, FSB Maury, vic XT6502, occupied by elements of 7/11 and 3/13 Arty, repulsed a strong ground attack.

\* \* \* \* \*

*emails*

*Feb 14, 03*

*I'll try again...Remember very well 9 May 68 ... Woke us up at around 1:00 in the am and told us my platoon had to lead the way to relieve a FSB (Maury?) as they were under ground attack...About 8-10 klicks as I remember...maybe a few less...when we got there about 2:00 in the am the Air force was dropping napalm on the northeast side of the FSB.. I called the air guy and told him to switch his target to the northwest side as we entered with our tracks thru the east side... gooks everywhere! It was composed (the FSB) of 2 Batteries of 105's and some kind of small US ground force to protect them... we fought all the rest of the night inside their wire (where it wasn't cut ) the gooks were inside the wire... I always hated when someone on the net said "they are inside the wire" . . . anyway about 45 minutes after day break, the gooks pulled back and we went out on foot to pursue...all told, I think the body count was in excess of 100...but the US forces (arty mostly) lost about 20 KIA that night . . .they blew a lot of the 105's up with satchel charges and there were body parts everywhere... I'll never forget slipping on a piece of someone's skull and falling down the next morning...the entire action took place about 15-20 klicks SW of Tan Son Nhut...I thought we were night laagered with A Company the night before May (5th)...Can't remember. Glad to see you made it!  
Bill B...Mohawk Bravo 26..*

*Jul 7, 2011*

*YES, REMEMBER IT WELL ?! THAT NITE WE GOT ALERTS FROM EVERYBODY THAT HAD OUT FREQ . MY MEMORY SAYS CO B, JIM HALES III*

WAS THERE. GOT RESCUE CALLS FROM BDE LNO, DIVARTY, EVEN SOME DUDE FROM CORPS ARTILLERY!

MEAN WHILE B CO WAS CALLING US, BDE WAS CALLING US, EVERYBODY SAID 'HELP'. WE WERE 10-12 K AWAY. I WAS CRANKING UP A CO, MONTGOMERY, CO C, MELLIS, RECON, HQ ELEMENTS. CANT REM IF WE HAD M 588'S THE PACHYDERMS. CALLED 4.2 MORTS, THOUGHT I HAD A WILCO. OFF WE GO. PUCKER FACTOR EXTREAM. COUNTRY' [Bill Loethen – ed.] WAS DRIVER. WE LATER CLAIMED THIS NITE ROAD MARCH WAS REALLY THE CATALYST FOR THE 'FLIGHT OF THE VALKYRYS', THE OPERA. COL F. [FULLERTON- ed], ME ON TRK 14. WE WERE HALF WAY THERE AND MORE SP 155 WERE HIT BY RPG AND THE DISTANT EXPLOSIONS IMPRESSIVE. GOT THERE SOONER THAN I THOUGHT WE WOULD/COULD AND NVA/VC MELTED AWAY. WITH MY GRATITUDE!

NEVER BEFORE WITNESSED SUCH PHYSICAL DESTRUCTION OF FRIENDLYS MEN AND MATERIAL. NEVER DID FIND ARTY GUYS THAT HAD BEEN INSIDE THOSE ENCLOSED [ armored] . . 155 SP'S. THE 155 and THEIR OPEN AMMO TRAKS LEFT CRATERS WHICH APPEARED SIMILAR TO 500# H.E. [bomb] SIZE. BY MID MORNING THEY WERE FILLING WEST. SUBSTANTIAL AMOUNTS OF WATER. TALKING TO SURVIVORS THERE WAS IMPOSSIBLE AS THEIR EARS HAD SHUT DOWN! THEY TRIED TO READ OUR LIPS. SHORTLY AFTER SUN UP I GOT A CALL FROM THE 4.2 MORTS. THEY ASK, WHERE ARE YOU ALL? SORTA LIKE W T F TODAY. I QUIETLY CHECKED ABOUT AND SURENUF THEY WERE M I A. TOLD THEM TO STAY PUT, PUTOUT SECURITY TO WOOD LINE AND RECON WOULD JOIN THEM SHORTLY AND RETURN THE SHEEP TO THE FOLD! WHEN RECON RETURNED I LEARNED THE MORTARS WERE STILL NOT READY TO MOVE OUT WHEN RECON REACHED THEM.

YES, LESSONS WERE LEARNED, HARD LESSONS. AND THAT'S THE WAY IT WAS, ACCORDING TO MY POOR MEMORY.

CAIN

\* \* \* \* \*

**On May 10, Gary A. Boche, and Gary L. Gadziala of Charlie Co were killed in action.** Possibly securing FSB Maury.

**On 11 May, Tommy W. Johnston of HHC, and Johnny E. Schertz of Charlie Co were KIA.**

**On 12 May, 1968 LTC Clifford Neilson assumed command of 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion, (Mechanized), 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry.**

**“On the 13<sup>th</sup>, Sammy L Brewer and Charles A. Urdiales, both of Bravo Co, and Roger J Dann of Alpha Co were KIA.**

A partial extract from LTC Neilson's diary this day: 12 May Spent day of 12th (and much of 11-13 May) w/ [with] LTC [Lieutenant Colonel] King Coffman, CO [Commander] 2/22, [2nd Battalion (Mechanized), 22nd Infantry Regiment, 25th

Infantry Division "Triple Deuce". Three 25th Division Mechanized Infantry Battalions included: 1<sup>st</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> Mech, **4<sup>th</sup>/23<sup>rd</sup> Mech**, 2<sup>nd</sup>/22<sup>nd</sup> Mech] at FSB [fire support base] Trang Bang. Visited other FSB and District Advisor. Met Bill Allison, former Auburn [ROTC] student [of mine.] Mortar nite of 11th. Man under tank track killed. 4 mortar men wounded. Rds [rounds] landed w/in [with in] 3 feet of track. B Co. under attack 0045-0200."

On 13 May, Col Neilson notes a series of instruction/directives he was availed of that also serve to provide overall insight into the "general situation for a person on the ground at that time, in Vietnam, in a Mech unit" in his italics:

**Stand down until 1200. Moved out 1330, moved vic. Ap Tram Loc XT6503. Deployed. Min. contact. Withdrew 1800 occupied blocking position north of My Hanh church.**

[Here followed what appear to be a series of inter-related directives, cautions, and observations.]

**1st Bde Comdr Notes** [Lt. Col. (F) Hodson]

1. **H& I fire - plan based on intel.** [Harassment & Interdiction fire was unobserved artillery fire, usually at night into areas of suspected or likely enemy activity.]

2. **Kit Carson scouts - should have 5-6/Bn.** [KC Scouts were SVN nationals supposedly trained to help lead US forces to NVA/VC areas. I do not recall who trained them, how they were assigned, or if any were assigned to 4/23.]

3. **Foxhole strength - keep close check on light duty.** [Light duty was a medical term used by doctors to designate individuals that temporarily were incapable of performing their duties. For an infantryman, this usually meant being left in a base camp and off combat assignments.]

4. **Over strength in HQ Co -Force medics & other non-combat troops. Keep Bde Comdr informed.** [The meaning of this is unclear to me.]

5. **Use 11B's** [11B was the Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) designator for infantry rifleman] **only when authorized - use twice wounded.** [Slightly shortened explanation – ed.]

6. **Organizing for LPs** (listening posts), **Patrols, etc - stay within organizational frame work. Maintain tactical integrity.**

7. **Fire hazards in base camp.**

8. **Reporting - accurate, timely-use preliminary reports-don't wait.**

9. **Defensive driving.**

10. **PC drivers have license.**

11. **Lateral extensions for APC.** [An APC driver steered by pulling back or moving forward a lever on either side of his seat. These levers were called laterals. If a driver were inside when the APC hit a mine, he was usually killed or seriously wounded. By extending the laterals with pipe or bars, through the driver's hatch to the top of the APC, the driver could control the vehicle while minimizing the danger to himself. Why the Bde CO felt it necessary to include this in his instructions is beyond me.]

12. **Helicopters - when in contact, helicopters will be made available.**

13. **Staff procedure - night operations, reporting procedures.**

14. **Know your weapons & what is available -use your tools - example CS** [a type on irritant tear gas], **flame thrower, smoke**

15. **Combined operations done whenever possible. Coord w/ district.**

*[Combined meant with RVN forces - regulars, Regional Force, Police. The district was a sub-division of a province commanded by a RVN officer.]*

**16. Professionalism - watch & guide.**

**17. Bunching up - Keep dispersed.**

**\*18. Accidents - double-check [to be ] used in mortar plats - stress prevention - control of weapons - as soon as action lightens up, accidents increase. Chain of Command letters, monthly safety lecture.**

**19. Discipline - Very bad in base camp. Haircuts, bathing, clean clothes.**

**20. Failure to hold ground - do not break contact. Maintain pressure.**

**21. SADEA - subversive literature. [No idea what this means.]**

**22. Wet season hygiene - dry feet, inspections.**

**23. Hyperventilation [?] - don't panic in wells**

**24. Red Rocket. [I believe this was a nickname for an emergency message, notifying recipient of impending action.]**

**25. Division msn [mission] - Interdict & destroy VC/NVA exfiltrating from Saigon.**

**14 May, Robert R. Hammer of Bravo Company was killed in action .**

**On 23 May, 1968, Timothy A. McGurty of Bravo Co was KIA.**

On 27 May, combat action in the division TAOI was focused on the area 14 km west of SAIGON at XS671925 where **4th Battalion, 23rd Infantry (Mechanized)** was located in a night defensive position. At 2250 on the 26th, the Battalion's night position came under mortar fire which was intermittent until 0330 hours when the position came under a massive ground attack. The **4th/23rd Infantry (Mech)** held off the human wave assaults with the aid of armed helicopters, artillery and air strikes. At dawn, the **4th of the 23rd** was reinforced by A and C Troops of the 3/4th Cavalry. The combined US force moved out of the NOP at first light and pursued the enemy which was attempting to break contact. The fire-fights in the general vicinity continued until 1600 hours. The enemy body count within the NDP [night defensive position] and the surrounding area was 243 VC KIA as compared to 6 US fatalities. In addition, three personnel were taken who identified their mauled unit as the 2nd Battalion, 273rd VC Regiment. Also captured were 28 AK-47 rifles, 11 RPG-2 rocket launchers, 16 machine guns, six 60mm mortars, 49 60mm mortar rounds, 58 hand grenades, 142 RPG-2 rounds and 22,500 rounds of small arms ammunition.

From LTC Neilson's Diary this day: "27 May - Nite of 26, and all of 27 - 2d battle of Xom Binh Dong. Started about 262200 with B Co., then A Co., then C Co. reporting movement to the north and south, moving west to east. First attack occurred against A Co. perimeter at 2205. Small arms fire only, no mortar or RPG. Arty, gunships, flare ships, organic mortars in support. Continuous illumination to daylight. Attacks against A & B Co. slacked off about 0400. C Co. not seriously attacked. Attacks resumed at 0600 against A & HQ Co. 2 APC knocked out, 2 APC damaged by RPG. B Co. attacked from south. Attack continued until 1400. C Co. swept area. All contact ceased 1600. Moved to new location. 5 wheeled vehicles stuck. Quiet nite. Thank God. Received letters ML & Father.

[Retrospective comments: my records show that the Commanders were: A Co. - Capt. Montgomery; B Co. - Capt. Hales; C Co - Capt. Mellis; Recon - Lt. Vessel. It was standard 25th Division tactics to employ battalion-size combat formations during both day and night operations within range of at least one battalion - and preferably two - artillery battalions. Since artillery could fire day or night without regard to weather, this assured that some indirect firepower could always be brought to bear. (For reasons that my diary entry does not reveal and my memory can not recall, the Laager either had no or minimal artillery coverage).

The US Air Force rose to the occasion, providing support almost as soon as the first shot was fired. During darkness, AC-130 Spectre gunships provided continuous flare and suppressive fire. The company commander would mark the forward edge of his APCs and the "Gatling Guns" in the 130's would "hose down" the area from which we believed the attack came. Since every 5th round was a red tracer, it looked like a red rope walking back and forth across the front lines. Normally on a night attack like this, the NVA would break contact about 0400hrs and leave the battlefield for the sanctuary of surrounding jungle. However in this case, they did not and their attack raged on with no sign of abatement.

About 0400hrs, we had begun to run out of small-arms ammunition and were becoming concerned that the NVA would move forward and attempt a close-combat assault. We called for helicopter resupply of ammunition. A brave H-34 Chinook helicopter crew dropped us a pallet by light of US Air Force-dropped flares. The pallet was on the Tan Son Nhut side of the Laager and fairly well shielded from the enemy view and fire.

I ordered the supply platoon leader to take a jeep and trailer and some men and go get the ammo. He refused, saying he was afraid he would be killed. I explained to him we were all afraid we would be killed, that a lot more of us would get killed if he didn't get the ammo, and repeated the order. He refused again. I drew my .45 pistol and told him if he did not go, I would shoot him. Before the threat worked or I had to carry it out, Battalion CSM Wise stepped between me and the Lieutenant, said he'd hate to see me end my career that way, and that he'd go get the ammunition. He did without incident and later received his 3d or 4th Silver Star for his actions. As soon as I could, I had court-martial papers prepared for the Lieutenant. Higher headquarters squelched the action and transferred him out of the division. I never saw or heard of him again. I do not know if I would have shot him had the BCSM not intervened. At this time, the battalion had a fully-staffed medical platoon commanded by a Captain Terry Schwartz, a medical doctor. Within the platoon were aid men, each assigned to a rifle platoon; aid men were trained much as current day fire and rescue emergency medical technicians. Their job was to stabilize a wounded man until he could be evacuated to the aid station where the doctor would take over. During operations, the doctor and the aid station were located within the Headquarters Company area.

Considering the duration and severity of the action, it was providential that there were only 5 KIA and 15 WIA. The WIA began to accumulate in the aid station almost from the first shot. The WIA could not be evacuated because the "Dustoffs" (helicopters dedicated to medical purposes, usually taking casualties from the battle field to a hospital) could not land due to the intense NVA .51 caliber anti-aircraft fire. After dawn, it became a typically very hot day and after the fighter-bomber attacks -

see below - there was no shelter from the sun for the wounded. The water had long since been used and they suffered. They were finally evacuated in the late afternoon.

As dawn broke and then at 15 minute intervals, 2 fighter-bombers would take off from Bien Hoa Air Base on the opposite side of Saigon, gain about 1500 ft elevation then nose down into a bomb release pattern. Because the NVA was within 500 meters of our front line, I had to give the Air Force permission to drop 500 and 1000 lb. that close. The bombs were equipped with drag devices to retard their fall so the aircraft could get away safely before the bomb exploded.

After about the second bomb drop, we realized that these parachutes made the bombs easy to see as they fell. We would continue firing until the last instant while someone watched the bomb. He would yell "Down!" and we would hit the ground. The bomb would explode with tremendous concussion and spray shrapnel throughout the air about 6-8 feet over our prone bodies. Every radio antenna, truck canvas, and my command tent was shredded.

The effect of the bombing on the NVA was horrendous. Amid great boiling clouds of dust, we could make out soldiers staggering around from the concussion. To a man, including the cooks, every "Tomahawk" rose up and began firing at the figures in the dust. Then someone would holler "Down!" and the process was repeated."

**On 27 May, 1968 at a location described as 8 km southwest of Cu Chi at Xom Binh Dong, these Tomahawks were killed in action: Ruben L. Horton, of Bravo Co; John P. Edwards and Ronal R. Wallace of Alpha Co, and Michael E. Ludwig of Charlie Co.**

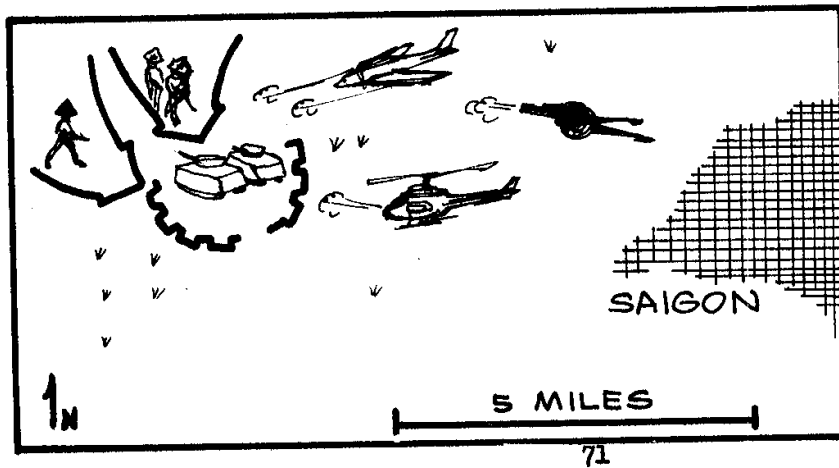
*From the Commanders Diary: 28 May - Policed battlefield with A, B, C Co, 3/4 Cav. Found additional 27 BC [body count,] 40-50-RPG rds, mortar rds, ammo, documents, 1 POW. Completed 1600. A Co. had accident with 5 killed, 2 wounded, box of claymore mines exploded. Rec'd pen from ML. Wrote ML 1 page letter. Sent her junk.*

*Additional retrospective comments: When the attack finally stopped about mid-morning, the 4/23 troopers moved into the killing area in front of the perimeter. It was littered with bodies, parts of bodies, weapons, and equipment. We used a 5-ton truck to collect NVA weapons and took them to Bien Hoa to be distributed to the US Air Force pilots and their supporting airmen who had played such a decisive part in the attack.*

*Division sent the 3/4 "Horse" under command of Lt. Col. Glen Otis to help us police the battlefield. As we approached the battle area an NVA with an RPG shot Otis off his command APC. Fortunately he was not badly wounded but was unable to return to his command. He subsequently became a Commanding General US Army Europe.*

*The A Company accident was determined to have occurred most likely because the crew had stored detonators in close proximity to the Claymores. Something set off the highly sensitive detonators which in turn set off the Claymores. The 5 killed were in the APC; the 2 wounded were in an adjacent APC and were hit by debris. Because of the uncertain nature of what caused the explosion, the five dead were*

listed as KIA.



26-27 MAY  
**218 EK**

An estimated enemy Battalion attacked a mech unit of the 1st Brigade, 25th Infantry Division in night defensive positions West of Saigon. The mech unit fought off the enemy and counter-attacked.

Graphic used to illustrate the battle in Gen Westmoreland's MACV Command History, 1968.

\* \* \* \* \*

A version of the 2 day battle appeared in the Tropic Lightning, the 25th Division newspaper.

"Combat action in the division TAOI on 27 May was focused on the area 14 kilometers west of Saigon at coordinates XS671925 where the **4th Battalion, 23rd Infantry** was located in a night defensive position. At 2250 on the 27th, the battalion's night position came under mortar fire which was intermittent until 0330 hours when the position came under a massive ground attack. The **4th of the 23rd** held off the human wave assaults with the aid of armed helicopters, artillery and air strikes. At dawn, the **4th of the 23rd** was reinforced by A and C Troops of the 3rd Squadron, 4th Cavalry. The combined US force moved out of the NOP at first light and pursued the enemy which was attempting to break contact. The fire-fights in the general vicinity continued until 1600 hours. The enemy body count within the NDP and the surrounding area was 243 VC KIA as compared to 6 US fatalities. In addition, three personnel were taken who identified their mauled unit as the 2nd Battalion, 273rd VC Regiment. Also captured were 28 AK-47 rifles,

11 RPG-2 rocket launchers, 16 machine guns, six 60mm mortars, 49 60mm mortar rounds, 58 hand grenades, 142 RPG-2 rounds."

General Westmoreland, Commander, US Military Assistance Command, Viet Nam (COMUSMACV) sent the following congratulatory message, a copy of which is in the 25th Division Foundation archives.

"Fighting west of Phu Tho Race Track night of 26 May and continuing through 27



May has taken a heavy toll of enemy forces. Hearty congratulations to **4/23 Inf** and to A and C Troops, 3/4 Cav for outstanding combat professionalism."

**On 28 May, these men were killed in action: William P. Flynn, Paul L. Gonzales, Richard J. Jones Jr, Robert M. Sopko, Robert J. Plourrde and William E. Bricker , all of Alpha Co.**

\* \* \* \* \*

May 9, 2012

Cliff:

*I recall clearly that we used them on the morning of 28 May. We had fought through most of the night before and it looked like the NVA had withdrawn. Just after dawn we came under intense fire. Some NVA squads had crawled up during the night and were almost at the edge of our perimeter behind rice paddy dikes. There was one squad, about 8-10 men on the southern perimeter. They were popping up and firing AKs and RPGs into the perimeter. Someone (I presumed at the time it was you) ordered the two flame tracks from the center of the perimeter to the southern edge to take this enemy element under fire. As the two flame tracks came on line the Soldiers manning that section of the perimeter moved away - no one wanted to be next to one of those tracks if they took an RPG. The drivers threw the transmissions into neutral and gunned the engines to engage the flame contraption's compressor. I remember seeing some sparks coming out of the track's exhaust they had the engines wound up so high. Then the gunners hosed down the rice paddy dike. One stream of flame went right over the top edge of the dike. One NVA stuck his head up as it came by and he was decapitated. That squad was silenced. Later in the afternoon when the 3/4 Cav arrived and the NVA had withdrawn we walked out and found all of that squad behind the dike. They were all dead - most if not all as a result of the flame.*

*The only other time I recall them in the field was when we had that battle east of Go Da Ha in late July. Someone (you?) ordered the flame tracks forward. Lt. Altman, who had been reassigned to Flame from Co. B, was riding prone atop one of the flame tracks and caught a bullet behind his knee that went up his leg. I think it was one of those fabled "million dollar wounds" that sent him to Japan.*

*Butch Sincock*

May 31, 09

Fellows:

*According to the most recent copy of the Coffelt Database that I have on my laptop, he was in Charlie Company. I'll contact the 1/5 and see why they list him.*

*As I recall the events of 27-28 May 68, there were three separate NDPs on a north-south axis due west of Saigon (southwest of Tan Son Nhut). There was a couple hundred meters between each NDP. It was pretty much a classic blocking position.*

*There was fighting going on in Saigon, primarily in Cholon and the 4/23 was tasked with preventing the NVA from sending reinforcements into Saigon from the west (Cambodia). I was in Alpha then and we were in the middle NDP with Bn HQ and the*

*Flame Platoon. I think Charlie Company was the southernmost NDP. At dusk, we sent out listening posts. Shortly thereafter, one of the LPs reported movement around them and then made contact. They were pinned down and Capt. Montgomery (Co. A CO) sent Lt. Danny Blake and some of his platoon out to pull the LP back. The FO, Lt. White, went with the rescue party. I know that he was KIA in the course of the rescue. That action may have accounted for most of the KIAs that night. Later that night we spotted NVA between us and Charlie Company with a Starlight scope. Unfortunately, the scope was not mounted on any weapon so we'd spot them with the scope and then fire in that direction with our M-16s & 50s. At one point Charlie Company (or whichever company it was that was south of us) complained that some of our firepower was impacting around them. I don't remember any of the details of attacks on the other two NDPs. We were pretty much preoccupied with what was going on around us. The attack broke off just before dawn. We figured it was over, then just after sunrise we discovered that the NVA had been crawling up to our perimeter behind the rice paddy dikes during the night and they opened up on us, resuming the attack. During the course of the day it was the most intense continuous firing that I encountered in my 12 months in-country. We ran out of ammo during the day and required air resupply.*

*The battle continued all day until the 3/4 Cav broke through the NVA cordon around us late in the afternoon. At that point the NVA broke contact and some of them were running away from us in the open. Some of the men were firing at them while others called for a cease fire to take prisoners. It was pretty chaotic. I also remember the body count the next day. As I recall it, the actual count was around 140, but on the theory that the NVA dragged off as many of their KIAs as possible, the count was inflated by 100.*

*See some of you soon!*

*Butch*

*May 31, 09*

*As I recall, Ap Cho and this event were the terror highlights of my 12 months.*

*Steve*

*(just damn glad to be able to talk about it!)*

\* \* \* \* \*

Division Recap: Most significant 25<sup>th</sup> Div's activities 1 May – 31 July saw counter-offensive operations to defeat the enemy's "2nd Phase Offensive" against SAIGON-CHOLON and search & destroy maneuvering to thwart and upset enemy preparations for his expected "3rd Phase Offensive" of late July / early August. The "2nd Phase Offensive" [1st Phase being the TET Offensive of 31 January - 18 February] began 2 May and continued to 15 May. Alerted by intel sources in late April of impending enemy attacks into capital region, 25th Infantry Division maneuvered most of its combat forces into the southeast quadrant of the Division TAOI to establish a screen beyond west environs of SAIGON-CHOLON. Deploying in depth in west GIA DINH province, east HAU NGHIA Province and north LONG AN Province, during early May, 25<sup>th</sup> Inf Division executed a mobile defense to block the enemy's main approaches from northwest, west, and southwest. When units of 5th

and 9th VC/NVA and 7th NVA Divisions committed to their approach marches beginning on 2 May, US 25th Infantry Division moved in force to successfully intercept and destroy them before they could reach assault positions. With his main ground thrust broken and turned back, the enemy then mounted his "100 rockets a day" 122mm rocket-mortar assault against capital region. Mounting extensive day and night ground/aerial patrols throughout a "rocket belt," 10-15 km west of SAIGON, Tropic Lightning Division systematically crushed this threat within a few days of its initiation.

\* \* \* \* \*

Info From Official Records: 1st Bde began TOAN THANG I on 7 April 1968 with 2 Bns (4/9th Inf; 3/22 Inf). 2nd Bde began with 4 Bns: (1/27<sup>th</sup>; 2/27<sup>th</sup>; 1/5<sup>th</sup> (M); 2/14<sup>th</sup> Inf). The 3rd Bde operated with 4 Bns (2/22<sup>nd</sup> (M); **4th Bn, 23rd Inf (Mech)**; 2/34<sup>th</sup> Armor; 3/4 Cav). The 199th Lt Inf Bde continued OPCON to 25th Inf Div, beginning activities in TOAN THANG with 3 Bns (3/7<sup>th</sup> Inf; 4/12<sup>th</sup> Inf; 2/12<sup>th</sup> Inf.)

\* \* \* \* \*

Nov 22, 07

*Where ever I was I was driving Bravo track 16 with Lt. Jeff H. sitting on a crate on the left rear. i know i wasn't a driver for Lt. jack W. on the 30th April when he was killed by a mine, i could have been driving for my favorite NCO George L. because I remember sitting on top of the track talking to George and hearing the explosion. . Whetsel was walking toward some of those high top tracks of HHC that had wandered into the mine field.*

*Nothing memorable comes to mind during the first week of may but looking at the casualties for may of 68 , Bravo probably was not with the other tomahawk platoons/ companies. maybe just doing the mundane road security as usual.  
Donn*

Jan 7, 07

*Farmer, I remember the night [in May 68] that we were part of the blocking force. I pulled LP that night. Gun ships, artillery and whatever else and the aerial flares we dropped all night. The next morning when I got back in I lay out my blanket and lay down but woke up on the back side of the track and my blanket and the side of the track was full of beehive darts.*

*As far as what I was called, it was Lee or Neal.  
R. Lee*

Jan 7, 07

*Read the info you sent me. Just want to clarify that during May of 1968, Bravo Co. was mainly running the roads and on an alert status in case the other Companies needed support. We did hit some shit, but not as badly as some of the other units in the 4th/23rd. If another unit got hit and we were close by and help was requested, then we would move in for support of that unit. Otherwise, we would continue*

running the roads. I lost two young men during this period ( PFC Hammer - 5/13/68 and my driver CPL McGURTY – 5/23/68 ). I credit Bravo's low casualty rate to the officers that were in charge, especially 1st Platoon's Six Lt. Hinkle who took his squad leaders advice, and acted accordingly. Talk to you soon.

Stan - THE POLACK

Jan 7, 07

Lee -- I'm happy to say I ain't been there and done that. I was scared enough after the perimeter was over-run and the 105 was turned in my direction while being pulled off the perimeter. Dummy me thought oh s---. I have some orders dated may 8 1968. Which could be a day off. I wonder if this the same nite you are talking about.

Farmer

\* \* \* \* \*

From Division Quarterly Report ending 31 Jul 68:

Throughout the reporting period several divisional units were reorganized under new TOE. These are as follows: 1st Battalion, 5th Infantry (Mech), 2nd Battalion, 22nd Infantry (Mech) and the **4th Battalion, 23rd Infantry (Mech)** to TOE 7-45G per USARPAC GO 226 DATED 7 May 1968.

\* \* \* \* \*

Jul 29, 03

In late May-June 1968 the 4/23rd was operating west of Saigon, conducting daytime RIFs and night time Ambush Patrols. The mission was to stop the NVA from attacking Tan Son Nhut Air Base.

After the monsoon season began it quickly became apparent that the APCs would be road-bound and of little mobility use. So we parked them and began to operate as heliborne infantry.

To help us scout areas normally impassable to foot, someone gave us two airboats to operate in the flooded rice paddies and small canals in the area.

Now for those of you who have never seen an airboat in person, they were the same ones you see on TV flitting across the Everglades. Big aircraft engine driving a large propeller mounted in the rear of the hull big enough for 4-6 people.

I gave them and the scouting mission to Recon. Someone figured out how to mount an M-60 machine gun on the bow and Recon was off and running. The boats came with a full tank of fuel and no instructions about maintenance or refueling. After a week or so of operating, it was time to refuel. Recon went and got a bunch of 5 gal cans of gasoline and filled the tanks. Unfortunately the engine required aviation gas, not JP-4 fuel. The boats quickly stopped with burned out engines. Higher-ups decided if we grunts couldn't figure out what kind of fuel the engine needed, they damn sure weren't going to give us any more boats. It was fun while it lasted and Recon got to airmobile with the rest of us.

Cliff Mohawk 6

\* \* \* \* \*

**SUMMARY OF TOAN THANG I BY GENERAL DONN STARRY.** From Mounted Combat in Vietnam. US Army, Center for Military History, 1989.

To relieve the pressure, free world forces attacked, with ARVN units now participating in strength. In early April [1968] TOAN THANG I was launched to drive enemy units away from Saigon. Highly decentralized, the operation was characterized by small daylight searches and night ambushes involving 79 Bns in III CTZ alone. Intelligence gathered in these actions revealed the imminence of a second enemy offensive. The Tet attack had suffered from poor coordination among the enemy units because strict security measures were employed. This time the enemy widely disseminated his plans, enabling the Allied forces to learn of them quickly from captured documents and prisoners. By late Apr, all invasion and infiltration routes into Saigon and other key cities were watched and heavily guarded.

This alertness, the large-scale allied ops after Tet, and heavy enemy losses during Tet weakened the Second Offensive in early May, which U.S. forces nicknamed "Mini-Tet." The main enemy effort was made around Saigon, where most of the combat took place. The 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry, got into action early when, on 5 May it discovered three NVA 17 km north of Saigon and triggered a two-day battle with an NVA Battalion. After massive air, artillery, and Air Cavalry support and constant mounted attacks by ACAVs and tanks, the combined arms team routed the enemy. By dark on the 6th, the NVA had gone, leaving over 400 dead on the battlefield. Closer to Saigon, the 5/60th Inf (Mech), and the 2/47th Inf (Mech), again closed with the enemy in house-to-house fighting near the "Y" bridge on the west edge of the city. The mech troops used every means of fire support available in six days of intense fighting that, curiously, was broken off each night by the enemy. The final major battle was fought on 10 May by the 5/60th Inf, and the enemy was driven away from the city for the last time.

Mop-up actions continued for a few days, but the battle for Saigon was over.

\* \* \* \* \*

After the May offensive failed, the enemy retreated to base camps with the free world forces in pursuit. Another minor attack was made against Saigon on 25 May, but the attackers were quickly routed. VC and NVA emerged from hiding places to surrender. On 18 June the largest number of enemy troops surrendered - 141 enemy soldiers turned themselves over to the ARVNs northeast of Saigon. Scattered and diminished fighting continued till late June. While the fighting was still going on, peace talks had begun in Paris on 13 May. The May attacks were but a shadow of the Tet offensive of February, and had no apparent military objective. It appeared that small groups of enemy soldiers were dispersed over wide areas in an attempt to make their attacks appear heavier than they actually were. A number of rocket attacks were also employed against the capital to create an image of Saigon under siege. The principal target was Saigon, with attacks in other areas of the country designed to divert free world forces. It appears probable that the attacks were intended to influence the peace talks rather than to achieve a military goal.

\* \* \* \* \*

[About 24 Apr 68] Reliable intelligence sources provided indications that NVA/VC main force units would attempt a major attack on Saigon and its environs on or about 1 May (Vietnamese Labor Day). To meet this threat, the 25th Infantry Division executed a major deployment of its assets on 23 April. All but two of its maneuver Bns were moved into the south and southeast parts of the TAOI to block the main avenues of approach into Saigon from the west. The 2nd Bde (1/27 Infantry, 2/27 Infantry, 1/5 Infantry, 3/22 Infantry, 2/34 Armor and 3/17 Cavalry) maneuvered in GIA DINH, BINH DUONG, LONG AN and HAU NGHIA Provinces within the Division TAOI. The 3rd Brigade (2/22 Inf (Mech) and 2/12 Infantry) assumed responsibility for the defense of TAY NINH and DAU TIENG base camp areas and the MSR's connecting them to CU CHI. The **4th Battalion 23rd Infantry (Mech)** was placed directly under division control.

Quoted from: The Defense of Saigon. HQ PCAF, Tactical Evaluation. 14 December 1968 -- regarding the "May Offensive", "Captured documents indicated the next offensive was scheduled for August or September. The estimate in part stated that the coming attacks would be fierce and VC would have to sacrifice more cadres than before. There were still a large number of troops coming from NVN."

\* \* \* \* \*

Enemy harassment through standoff mortar and rocket attacks throughout the brigade AO was prevalent. f. On 3 Feb a PW stated that local units in Hoc Mon were to assist movement of 101st NVA Regt. towards Saigon, generally following Saigon River from Dau Tieng area down through Hoc Mon. Other units identified early Feb were 242 Bn, with its HQs in Ba Thu, Cambodia, but operating in Duc Hue area, and continued identification of 268th Regt in Citadel area. g. At the end of TOAN THANG II, there was still evidence of main force units in brigade AO. The 268th Regt and the 88th Regt had taken heavy losses, but were receiving replacements from NVN through Fishhook area. Local Force guerillas, though sustaining losses, still had the capability to harass military installations and terrorize many sections of civilian community. In turn, there were still adequate numbers of civilians who were either neutral or sympathetic to local forces to permit concealment and resupply.

9. (C) Mission: 2nd Brigade conducts offensive operations in TAOI commencing 1 June 1968 to: a. Frustrate enemy plans, locate and destroy VC/NVA forces, base camps and support areas. b. Defend Phu Cuong, Ba Bep and Trang Bang Bridges. c. Clear and secure MSR's d. Execute Pacification program (after 25 October called "Colors Up"). e. Conduct VCI operations. f. Develop targets for B-52 and persistent CS strikes. g. Conduct combined offensive ops in conjunction with 25th and 5th ARVN Infantry Div's throughout TAOI to destroy enemy forces. h. Interdict movement by VC/NVA forces through TAOI through various corridors by extensive activities within the corridors.

(D.?) Concept of Operation: 2nd Brigade in conjunction with the 25th ARVN Div, RF/PF units and National Police, conducted combined and unilateral offensive

operations within TAOI to pre-empt VC/NVA initiatives, to interdict his lines of communications and to counter enemy initiatives.

\* \* \* \* \*

**OPERATION TOAN THANG II** (1 June 68 – 16 February 69) This 211 day operation was in progress when Tropic Lightning Division closed out its 27th year. The operation included RVN and US forces, and covered the entire III CTZ. The op's second and third days belonged to ¾ Cav gunship crewmen operating along Saigon River who turned up an entrenched enemy force, a cache of 27 122mm rockets, and two 122mm rocket launchers. Aided by DivArty, the Cav destroyed the rockets, launchers, and 38 VC.

On 1 June, **4 - 23 Inf. (M)**, effective 010700 hrs June 68, became OPCON 2nd Bde. Established new night location vic XS754966.

On 2 June, during the day, **4<sup>th</sup> Bn 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry (Mech)** units conducted RIF and Cordon and Search Operations. At 0220 hrs, **Co B/4-23 Infantry (Mech)** vic XS749972, engaged 15 VC with 81mm, VC losses unknown. At 0300 hrs **Co A** vic XS749972, engaged an unknown number of VC with 81mm, VC losses unknown. At 0300 hrs **Co B** vic XS749972 received SA and rifle grenades from an unknown number of VC, negative casualties. At 0043 hrs **Company B** vic XS749972, engaged 50 VC with 81mm, VC losses unknown. At 1645 hrs supporting FAC, vic XS708850, engaged 2 VC, resulting in 2 VC KBA (BC).

3 June at 1150 hrs, **4/23<sup>rd</sup> Inf (M)** in vic XS789943, sustained 1 US NBI. The indiv was struck by a cable which snapped while towing another vehicle. At 1240 hrs vic XS756958, sustained 1 US NBI resulting from a broken hand. At 1842 hrs 2nd Bde C&C ship, vic XS706857, engaged 2 VC with automatic weapons, resulting in 1 VC KIA (BC) and 1 VC KIA (poss). Company A in blocking position in Hoc Mon, other companies conducting RIFs.

4 Jun **4/23<sup>rd</sup> (M) Inf** maintained night laager at WS789943. A, B, and C Cos conducted RIFs while Recon secured laager position.

7 June, Co A/1/27<sup>th</sup> Inf OPCON to **4<sup>th</sup> Bn 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry**. **Co A, B 4/23<sup>rd</sup>** conducted airmobile assault to secure downed aircraft. **C Co** conducted cloverleaf operations & RIFs with RF/PF units.

8 June 68. **4<sup>th</sup> Bn -23<sup>rd</sup> Inf (-)**: At 2144 hrs **Co B** roving patrol, vic XS706998, engaged 3 VC with SA and AW, resulting in 3 VC KIA (BC). At 1050 hrs **Co A**, vicinity of XS694935, engaged 2 VC with SA, resulting in 2 VC KIA (BC). At 1127 hrs, **Company A** vic XS694935, engaged 2 VC with SA, resulting in 2 VC KIA (BC). At 1127 hrs **Co A** vic XS694035, engaged 3 VC with SA and AW, resulting in 3 VC KIA (BC). At 1132 hrs **Co A**, vic XS694934, engaged 1 VC with AW, resulting in 1 VC KIA (BC). At 1350 hrs **Co A**, vicinity of XS694934, engaged 1 VC with SA, result 1 VC KIA (BC). At 1413 hrs supporting gunship vic XS694934, engaged 1 VC

with AW, result 1 VC KIA (BC). At 1427 hrs recon platoon, vic XS730956, sustained 1 US NBI, resulting from a broken leg. At 1510 hrs Company A, vicinity XS789953, sustained 1 US WIA, resulting from fragmentation wounds. At 1555 hrs **Co B**, vic XS789954, had 1 US NBI, resulting from a sprained wrist.

On 13 June, **C Company, 4th Battalion, 23rd Infantry (Mech)** sweeping through a swamp midway between SAIGON and DUC HOA (XS695950) at 0915 hours, discovered and confiscated a large enemy ammunition cache located in four sunken sampans. The cache included 10 complete 122mm rockets, 82 each 82mm mortar rounds, 12 cans of 82mm fuses, 24 cans of 82mm primer, and 5,250 AK-47 rifle rounds. At 1000 hours B Company, 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry sweeping through the SAIGON "rocket belt" received fire from an unknown size enemy force at XT784072. The company returned fire and called in armed helicopters, artillery and air strikes on the enemy positions. Sweeping through the area later in the day, the infantrymen counted 13 NVA KIA and captured two AK-47 rifles, one .30 caliber machine gun and two RPG-2 rocket launchers .

**Tomahawk Robert Creech Jr of A Co was killed in action this day.**

**14 July:** *(From Cliff's Diary)* Quiet nite. **A, B, C Co's RIF'D C Co. Cmd. Grp. ambushed - Capt Mellis wounded in stomach, Lt Pickens, FO, in shoulder. 2 others. A, B, C Co's destroyed base camps. B Co. found 110 lbs rice, 1 PRC 10, 4 RPG, 4 bolts cloth, documents-D14. Received POW camp mission. Recon OPCON Fullback. Rec'd 3 letters: ML, 1 Clark, 1 Vic, 1 dad. Wrote ML**

Headlines on 21-23 June concerned 3rd Bde, 101st Abn Division was OPCON to 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, replacing the 25<sup>th</sup>'s 3rd Brigade, temporarily attached to Capital Military Assistance Command (CMAC) Saigon. Near the Cambodian border nine miles southwest of Trang Bang they uncovered 110 RPG-2 & 106 recoilless rifle rounds. The last day of June, 5 miles north of Trang Bang, the 101<sup>st</sup> fought off an NVA assault on their NDP, killing 18.

\* \* \* \* \*

**NEW CAMPAIGN Counteroffensive Phase V 1 July 1968 – 1 November 1968**

*From the Commander's Diary: 18 July - [Field strength] 486. Unquiet nite - 0230 A Co. attacked w/ RPG & S/A. Destroyed 1 tank, WIA 3. 0300 called in LFT [helicopter light fire team from 3d Sqdr, 4<sup>th</sup> Cav]. Error in delivery resulted in 2 KIA, 3 WIA A Co. [They were in an ambush patrol about 500 meters in front of the laager.] No further contact. B & C Co's RIF'd [recon in force - ed.] together west-to-east to junction of Rome Plow areas. B & C Co's had combat resulting in 3 KIA, 15 WIA in large VC base camp area XT480355. 2 APC destroyed. Laagered in vic. of contact. Recon returned OPCON of Bn. 12 air strikes. Moved LT Altman. Arty fired 1096 rds. Causes of breakdowns*



LTR [light track retriever, a recovery vehicle for APC.]  
No mail

*Retrospective comment: "I remember the incident well when the 3/4 LFT fired on the ambush patrol in error. A subsequent investigation established that the pilots had spotted men in the open, assumed they were NVA/VC, and opened fire without checking with their or our operations center. This violated stringent Rules of Engagement. The pilots and battalion commander were administratively punished, effectively ending their careers. A small comfort to the families of those killed."*

**KIAs this day (18 July) were Lawrence A Davis of Alpha Co, Terry K Huff and Gary B Sanford of Bravo Co, and Alvin M. Laster of HHC.**

\* \* \* \* \*

July 4, 2011

*Fellows: Mohawk 6 asked me to republish my July 4<sup>th</sup> story. Unfortunately, I am down in FL and don't have access to my digital archives back in my PA office, so I've got to reconstruct this bit of history from my aging memory. I'm going to do the best that I can and hope that I won't be far off what I recollected the last time that I wrote about this. Maybe, like some war stories you hear again and again at reunions, it will get better with the retelling! LOL What follows is my best recollection, without intentional embellishment, of the situation and events of July 4, 1968.*

*I arrived in country in early May '68, assigned to the 25<sup>th</sup> ID. Sent to Cu Chi, I attended the orientation course there and then was assigned to the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade at Tay Ninh. Arriving at Bde HQ I was further assigned to the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Mechanized) 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Regiment, recently relocated from Cu Chi and at that exact time on a standdown in Tay Ninh West. LT Danny Blake and I reported to LTC Neilson who sent us to Alpha Company. Captain Montgomery flipped a coin to determine who got what assignment. Danny got a rifle platoon and I got the mortar platoon.*

*About a month later LTC Neilson decided that Alpha was flush with officers and Bravo needed another LT. So, I joined Capt Hales and his only other platoon leader and was assigned a rifle platoon. I recall it was 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon, but Donn McMahon says it was 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon. I'm pretty sure I'm right, but maybe his memory serves him better than mine.*

*The battalion was working the "rocket belt" around Saigon in June. We were in an NDP along Highway 1, right across the roadway from Gate 51, an entrance to Tan Son Nhut Airbase right at the western end of the main runway. Our tracks sat on the footing and tile floors of homes destroyed during the January 31<sup>st</sup> battle for Tan Son Nhut on the first day of Tet. During the day we'd go out into the villages and rice paddies northwest of Saigon on Search & Destroy operations, looking to find rocket launchers, supplies and the enemy who had been lobbing 122mm rockets pretty indiscriminately into Saigon most evenings.*

*This involved moving out before daybreak, dropping off our Soldiers at Point A and then sweeping to Point B where our tracks would meet us. On a couple of occasions we got helicopter support and leaving our tracks back at the NDP, we'd*

hopscotch around the countryside, setting down in one LZ, sweeping through a village or small forest and then get picked up at another LZ. We'd repeat the process for hours on end. These were usually daylong operations. However, while the bulk of the day was standard infantry operations, the evenings were something else.

Many nights we would leave an officer and an NCO in charge of a handful of Soldiers, and the bulk of the company would go onto Tan Son Nhut. NCOs & Soldiers would go to the USAF NCO & EM clubs and the officers would go to the O-club. All we had to do was walk across the roadway, enter the airbase and hitch a ride to the clubs. At this point in time the 25<sup>th</sup> patch on your shoulder was a "golden ticket" to USAF hospitality thanks to the Three-Quarter Cav's successful defense of Tan Son Nhut back on that first day of Tet. Over time we would wear out our welcome at the AF base, but in June and early July we were still welcome guests on base.

I do not recall the exact operation we conducted on July 4<sup>th</sup>, but it was likely another search for elements of the rocket belt northwest of the airbase. That evening a half-dozen officers crossed Highway #1 and entered Tan Son Nhut through Gate 51. As was SOP, we caught a ride onto the main base and found our way to the O-club.

After 23:30 hours, the band (either Korean or Philippine) began the usual close-out of tunes. They played "Anchors Aweigh," "Off We Go Into The Wild Blue Yonder," the USMC anthem and "The Caissons Go Rolling Along," followed by "American the Beautiful" and a handful of other stand-by patriotic tunes.

About half-way through the final set, our little squad of Tomahawk officers walked out the front door and surveyed the street running in front of the club. Only a few yards from the front door we spotted our objective: an unsecured M-151 "Jeep." We requisitioned this piece of USAF property and headed back to Gate 51. When we got there we explained to the Air Police guarding the gate that we had found this abandoned vehicle (wink-wink) and we knew that the great APs at Gate 51 would certainly be able to see that it was returned to its grateful owner (wink-wink). They thanked us for our concern for USAF property (wink-wink) and assured us that the vehicle would be returned to its rightful owner. That was the way it was many an evening in June and the early days of July 1968.

On July 4<sup>th</sup>, we followed the protocol and returned to the 4/23 position on the west side of Hwy #1 across from Gate 51. There were some Soldiers returning from the AF clubs passing through the gate around the same time and walking across the roadway into our perimeter.

I headed straight for the latrine that night. As my wife likes to say, "You don't have a beer, you borrow it." After I returned several beers to the Vietnamese soil, I threw open the spring-loaded latrine door and walked out just in time to see one of our men walk up the ramp of a track, go inside, and exit a moment later with a bagful of star-clusters.

Placing the bag at his feet, he pulled the top off of one of them, flipped it over and put it on the bottom of the tube. Then he slammed his palm up the base and off into the sky went a red star cluster. In short order he launched the rest of his stash lighting the sky with red, green and white fireworks. This prompted several other Soldiers to retrieve star-clusters from their tracks and sustain the fireworks.

*This activity prompted a certain LTC to appear and issue commands to cease-and-desist. I think he was assisted by a Sergeant Major or other senior NCO on battalion staff. As quickly as it had begun, the Tomahawk fireworks ceased. Then something wonderful happened.*

*To the north and west the horizon was lit up with a dozen or more star-cluster fireworks displays. They were like little domes of colored light rising on the horizon. It didn't last long – maybe five minutes, and it wasn't particularly spectacular, but it was the most heart-warming fireworks display that I have ever seen or probably ever will.*

*I'm sure a certain LTC probably sweated out some fall-out from somewhere up the chain of command, but as far as I know, there were no repercussions, other than a great memory for all who witnessed that July 4<sup>th</sup> spirit thousands of miles from home 43 years ago.*

*Wishing you all a joyous 4<sup>th</sup> – Keep our Soldiers in your prayers and thoughts.  
Butch*

*JULY 3, 2011*

*GREAT STORY BUTCH, I COULD ONLY REMEMBER THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE NEXT DAY. I FOUND THE BN TO BE THE MOST/BEST DISCIPLINED UNIT OF THREE I SERVED IN VN. THIS INCLUDED THE SO NAMED ELITE PARA UNITS. HAPPY 4TH, TOMAHAWKS. BEST ALL AROUND, CAIN B PS. REMEMBER THE BONES WE SET THE BN TOC UPON ? THE DEPARTED VC/NVA WERE STILL TRYING TO CLAW THEIR WAY TO THE SURFACE FROM WHEN THE 25 DIV 3/4 HORSE KICKED UM HARD AT TET. OF COURSE WE ADDED AN ADDITIONAL SEVERAL HUNDRED WHILE COL NEILSON DIRECTED OUR EFFORTS OUTSIDE TSN LATE JUN/JUL 68.  
CAIN B.*

*Jul 7, 11*

*REMEMBER DINING OVER THERE? MIXED EMOTIONS RIGHT. I WISH TO THANK THE CHARLIE HQ TRACK AND BN HQ TRACK 14 FOR SAVING ME THE EGGS WITH HAM AND HAM SLICES WITH THE ROUND CRACKERS! DOESNT MAKE HOME SICK EITHER! BEST ALL AROUND TO ALL,  
CAIN B*

*\* \* \* \* \**

From Tropic Lightning News”

“1ST BDE – (14JUL68) Following up an intelligence report of enemy activity in the Boi Loi Woods, the **4th Battalion (Mechanized), 23d Infantry Tomahawks**, routed through a regimental-sized Viet Cong base camp.

“Company E [ ? – ed.] , commanded by **First Lieutenant Morgan Sincock** of Natick, Mass., was sweeping on a reconnaissance-in-force mission on the northwest edge of the Boi Loi Woods when they received automatic weapons fire from both flanks. Immediately returning fire, the Tomahawks deployed in defensive positions.

“The battalion commander, **Lieutenant Colonel Clifford C. Neilson** of Mobile,

Ala., was flying over the scene of battle in his command and control (C&C) helicopter and began directing maneuvers when he noticed a wounded U.S. soldier pinned down between Company B and the estimated reinforced VC company.

“The enemy also realized the precarious situation of the wounded man and tried to prevent anyone from coming to his aid. After three daring attempts, the wounded 1st Brigade soldier was extracted to a safe location for dust-off.

“The 1st Brigade infantrymen withdrew from the thick jungle and Neilson directed gunships from the 3d Squadron, 4th Cavalry, artillery from the 7th Battalion, 11th Artillery, and Air Force tactical air strikes on the enemy concealed in the dense foliage. While the area of contact was being hammered mercilessly, Charlie Company, commanded by Captain Henry Phillips of Columbus, Ga., maneuvered to link up with Bravo to form an arc around the enemy base camp.

“When the suspected enemy positions were well softened-up Charlie Company attempted an assault from another flank and ran into two RPG nests. The fire fight raged into the night when the two Tomahawk companies withdrew to set up a defensive night location just 300 meters from the area of contact.

“The next day, the Tomahawks assembled on line and walked through the impregnable base camp with little resistance. “They certainly must have left here in quite a hurry because of all the equipment they left behind,” pointed out Major Cain Bridgman of Chattanooga, Tenn., the battalion operations officer. There were field packs scattered all over and blood-stained bandages lying along blood trails.

“Bunkers with as much as five feet of overhead cover were checked out thoroughly. Company A, commanded by Captain Henry Montgomery of Memphis, Tenn., found a weapons cache in a bunker in the center of the huge base camp. The weapons were believed to belong to the enemy’s heavy weapons section.”

\* \* \* \* \*

22 July saw **4<sup>th</sup> Bn (M) 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry** sweeping 4 km north of Go Dau Ha vic XT392301 and engaging an unknown-size force. US responded with helo gunships, artillery, and TAC AIR & Tomahawks were reinforced with Company A and C, 1<sup>st</sup> Bn 5<sup>th</sup> Inf. Contact lasted thru the day and night. Daylight search found 13 VC KIA (BC).

\* \* \* \* \*

From CIA Report, “Situation in III Corps Week of 19 Aug 68”

The security situation continues to look generally bleak in a number of provinces in III Corps. The saturation of the corps by allied forces, including 98 maneuver battalions, [emphasis added – ed.] and the high load of friendly ground and air operations, have probably precluded chances of a successful communist assault against Saigon and its environs. Elsewhere in the corps allied operations appear to be an effective thorn in the enemy’s side, and may have disorganized and thrown the enemy off stride. Nevertheless, it appears that for the time being the Vietcong have fulfilled the preliminary goals they feel they need to support a corps-wide third offensive.

**BATTLE OF TAY NINH '68 and TOAN THANG II.** A month and a half lull followed as 25<sup>th</sup> Division searched, finding tons of munitions, food and clothing. The only big contact in July occurred before dawn 4 July when an est two enemy Companies took on Dau Tieng Base. They directed 550 mortars and rockets into the compound. During the ground attack, 5 NVA or VC cut thru the wire on the western perimeter and ran toward the bunker-line when defenders felled them. A second wave hit the east perimeter, slinging more than 400 satchel charges onto the airstrip, but none exploded. The enemy withdrew leaving 10 dead. Most of 3rd Brigade's tactical units were operating around Saigon at the time, leaving mostly cooks, clerks and truck drivers to defend the base. Their success was a tribute to support troops who manned most of the bunkers.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Background given in US 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division report on the Battle of Tay Ninh:*

*Participating enemy units were (1) 5th NVA Division comprising 275th Regt , 33d Regt , 88th Regt; (2) 9th VC Division [ format problem –ed.] comprising 271st Regiment, 272d Regiment , 273d Regiment, 101st Regiment; (4) 174th Regiment; (5) D14 Local Force Battalion; D16 Local Force Battalion.*

*d. Weather: The months of August and September were in the middle of the southwest monsoon. The weather was characterized by hot humid days with heavy rain showers in late afternoon and early evening. There were about 12 hours of daylight per day. The sun rose at 0641 hrs and set at 1903 hrs in early August.*

*By late September, daylight hours were reduced as sunrise was at 0642 hours and sunset was at 1841 hours.*

*e. Terrain: The northern half of the province is characterized by dense, heavily vegetated forest/Jungle. The western part of the southern half is open, flat, agricultural land with patches of forest; the southeast has open land, forests and four large rubber plantations. The rubber plantations, as well as the central part of the province, have a network of relatively good dirt roads. Trafficability for foot, vehicle and tracks was from good on roads to extremely poor in rice paddies.*

*f. Officials of TAY NINH Province were uncertain of the enemy's intentions and capabilities in March, April, and May 68 as his troop strength was largely unknown. However, two VC provincial battalions, two VC provincial companies and the local VC district guerrilla organizations were confirmed operating within the provincial boundary. Infiltration through the province toward SAIGON had increased to about one battalion a day in preparation for the enemy's next offensive. These infiltrating battalions assisted the local guerrilla and provincial units as they passed through, in exchange for guides, food, supplies, etc.*

*g. The enemy infiltrated into the province from CAMBODIA west of the FISH HOOK area (XT5890) into a staging area south and east of KATUM (XT3390) near the Saigon River, west of the MICHELIN Rubber Plantation (XT5650) and east of SUI DA (XT3357). Among the infiltration routes from this stronghold was one through CAU KHOI Rubber (XT3240) west across the VAM CO DONG River through RENEGADE WOODS (XT2930) and into ANGEL'S WING. This is in CAMBODIA,*

east of grid line XT2214 to XT2614, used for staging attacks against SAIGON. Considering the enemy's main stronghold and infiltration route outlined above within the province, it was believed that one objective was to interdict National Route 22 near the CAU KHOI Rubber (vic XT3135) and isolate TAY NINH City from SAIGON.

h. ARVN forces successfully defended TAY NINH in May against a three Bn VC attack on the Chieu Hoi Center located between Cao Dai Temple (XT241496) and TAY NINH City (XT1950-2050), and on the Special Forces complex astride Highway 4 (XT204509). Advisors believed this attack was conducted by an infiltrating unit. The province experienced more enemy-initiated incidents in the May Offensive than during the entire TET first phase toward General Offensive / General Uprising.

i. Enemy recovery from setbacks of the May attack began in June with harassing activities. In early July, intel revealed that a major attack on the city would be initiated. 5th NVA and 9th VC Div's bases had been located in the province at XT4460 and XT1876 (four-digit) respectively. This is probably the first time that two Div-size units were known to be located in the province. By 20 July indications were clear that a large attack would be conducted against the city within a few days. On 24 July, Acting Cmdg Gen, BG William T. Gleason dispatched the 2nd/27<sup>th</sup> Inf to TAY NINH Province to reinforce 25th Inf Div's 1st Brigade whose AO generally encompassed the province. In addition to 2nd/27<sup>th</sup>, the Brigade had OPCON 1/5<sup>th</sup> Inf (M); **4<sup>th</sup> Bn, 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry (M)**; 3d /22<sup>nd</sup> Inf, and 2/34<sup>th</sup> Armor (-B, C). 7/11 Arty supported, generally by elements of 23d Arty Group. The Brigade established defensive FSBs around the city from which infantry units could conduct wide ranging ops to interdict and preempt enemy movement on TAY NINH City, with mutual support by FSB and Inf units. At the same time, Brigade set similar defenses around DAU TIENG, a major base in BINH DUONG Province 25 km east of the [Tay Ninh] city. Province HQs assembled a Bn-size RF reserve composed of the 161st, 267th, 315th and 688th Rifle Companies operating under supervision of sector staff (the Province Chief is Sector Commander and has a staff of ARVN officers assigned. The staff is comparable to a US Inf Bn, and has the mission of defending TAY NINH City. The remainder of outlying hamlets, villages and towns were protected by permanently assigned RF/PF forces and other local defense units such as CIDGs, Revolutionary Development cadre and Census Grievance cadre.

j. When the attack failed to materialize in late July and the battle lull that had existed in the province since mid-May continued, intel was reassessed. The date for the predicted attack was estimated as early Aug, later moved forward to mid-Aug. The need to change the anticipated attack dates was believed to be the result or extensive preemptive actions conducted throughout the province to counter the enemy build-up. Among these measures was a steady increase of B-52 strikes against suspected enemy base camps, supply caches and assembly areas. In August, September and October, 1968, a total of 253 missions were flown in the province. Generally, each mission contained six aircraft with each averaging 30,000 pounds of ordnance. Several US advisors believed that extensive use of B-52 strikes forced the enemy to stay above ground at all times and susceptible to artillery fire which was employed in abundance from the various FSBs.

k. Intel later confirmed two enemy Battalions were destroyed by these strikes. One battalion, in STRAIGHT EDGE WOODS (XT1334 four-digit), was believed to

*have had the mission of attacking the city from the south. The other was located in an advance position north of NUI BA DEN. Sector personnel believed the B-52 strikes probably forced the enemy to delay his attack because of heavy losses and the need to regroup and resupply forces.*

*I. All allied forces located in III ARVN CTZ were participating in Op TOAN THANG (COMPLETE VICTORY) which was initiated by OPORD 5-68, HQs, II FFORCV and III ARVN Corps, dated 5 April 1968. 25th Infantry Division (US) prepared and issued OPORD 1-68 to all organic units. Message AVFBC-OP #050470, Cmdg Gen, II FFORCV, Subject: Operation TOAN THANG (U), dated 31 May 68, re-designated the campaign as TOAN THANG II effective 312400 May 68. These same forces had been involved in a similar operation entitled RESOLVED TO WIN which began subsequent to the 1968 TET Offensive and terminated just prior to the initiation of COMPLETE VICTORY.*

*.....*

*o. Many consider the entire heavily populated complex to be TAY NINH City; however, this is a misconception as TAY NINH City proper is generally the part located in grid squares XT1950, XT1951 and XT2050.*

11. (c) Mission: Allied forces operating in III CTZ were to conduct a combined offensive over an extended period to locate and destroy all enemy units operating in the area.

12. (C) Concept of operation and execution: Col Freemont B. Hudson's basic plan for the defense of TAY NINH City was to deploy forces beyond the city in blocking positions astride likely enemy avenues of approach.

From infantry-artillery FSBs, 25th Inf Division's 1st Brigade mounted extensive daylight RIF and heli-borne assault ops designed to detect and destroy enemy in assembly areas and approach marches. Daylight ops were supplemented by numerous platoon-size night ambush patrols along principle roads, trails and waterways.

This concept was executed by establishing FSB BUELL on route 4 three km northwest TAY NINH (XT213532) and FSB RAWLINS six km east of the city (XT301502). The permanent 25th Infantry Division base camp (Bde-sized) seven km west of the city at Tay Ninh West, (FSB RAWLINS six km east of the city (XT301502), and maneuver elements deployed in outposts northwest and west of the city.

25 km east of TAY NINH, another permanent Bde-sized Division base camp, Camp RAINIER, at DAU TIENG (XT495475) served as a base of operations for 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade forces operating in that general area. Cross-attachment between Inf and Mech Infantry Battalions was employed.

AO's around the city were assigned: 3/22<sup>ND</sup> Inf, LTC Alexander H. Hunt Cmdg operated from FSB BUELL with an AO of TAY NINH; **4th Bn, 23d Inf (M), LTC Clifford C. Neilson, Commanding**, maneuvered from FSB RAWLINS throughout an AO east of the city; 2/27th Inf, LTC John F. Kenney Jr., Cmdg, worked from TAY NINH Base, outposting and maneuvering west of base camp and city; with HQs, and A/2/34<sup>th</sup> Armor, commanded by LTC Theodore E. O'Connor was at TAY NINH Base Camp as reserve, receiving additional attached units as the situation dictated.

Direct arty support for maneuver elements was provided by 7/11<sup>th</sup> Arty, LTC Forest E. Pierce, Cmdg, whose batteries were deployed at FSB BUELL, RAWLINS, TAY NINH Base Camp and DAU TIENG Base Camp. Eight-inch and 175mm artillery support was provided by the 1/27<sup>th</sup> Artillery and the 2/32<sup>d</sup> Artillery deployed at base camps and FSB ST. BARBARA at BAU CO (XT275685), 17 km north of TAY NINH City. General support artillery was organic to 23<sup>rd</sup> Group, II Field Force Artillery.

1<sup>st</sup> Bn 5<sup>th</sup> Inf (M), LTC Andrew Anderson Cmdg, operated from DAU TIENG Base Camp covering a wide arc including MICHELIN Rubber Plantation to the east and the BEN CUI Rubber Plantation to the west. Within the city of TAY NINH, the 161<sup>st</sup>, 267<sup>th</sup>, 315<sup>th</sup> and 688<sup>th</sup> RF Rifle Co's and 2d Trp, 10<sup>th</sup> Cav, 25<sup>th</sup> ARVN Division were organized into a provisional battalion under the control of the Province Chief. In the outlying hamlets, villages and towns, permanently assigned RF / PFs deployed in squads and platoons, assumed a static defense to engage any enemy who might penetrate the heavily populated urban area. Despite wide ranging operations of 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade maneuver elements to find the enemy, contact was rare, and the lull characterizing operations in TAY NINH Province since mid-May continued through July and mid-August.

LTC Albert N. Stubbleline, 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division G-2, continued to predict a major attack on TAY NINH City. Maj Gen Ellis W. Williamson who assumed command of the division on 3 August directed a continuation of the operations around the city. LTC Duquesne A. Wolfe, assumed command of 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade on 5 August and continued to pursue the general strategy and tactics established by Col Hodson of blocking enemy avenues of approach. To avoid pattern operations, Fire Support Base BUELL was closed and relocated.

On 10 August, FSB BUELL II was established four km north of the old fire base (XT227568).

\* \* \* \* \*

**On 3 August, Larry L. Elzinga and Frank A Harrah, both of Alpha Co were KIA. Database notes for Harrah "Xom Bo Long, 11km WSW Cu Chi base." On 8 August, Dwight E. Mooney of HHC was KIA, On 9 August, Statue Mosby Jr of Charley Company was KIA.**

When the week closed, more than 900 enemy soldiers had been struck by Tropic Lightning and died as a result.

From Col Neilson's Commanders Diary: 13 Aug Quiet nite. C Co. dismounted sweep alongside rubber SE then circle back through Rubber. R block. B Co. OPCON D. A Co. on road. Neg results. B Co. has 6 wounded by command detonated claymore vic. Base of Nui Ba Din. Letter from & to ML. **On 13 August, James A. Lisenby, of B Co was KIA.**

On 17 August '68, the tempo and intensity picked up. An ambush patrol from 2<sup>nd</sup> 27<sup>th</sup> Infantry detected and reported a column of 300 enemy later identified as 3<sup>rd</sup>



Battalion, 275<sup>th</sup> Regiment moving toward the city. They reported and engaged the enemy, and were supported with 120 rounds of artillery. The enemy formation broke and withdrew.

The same night, an attempt to commandeer several APCs in the city was foiled. Approx 20 enemy attacks were launched throughout the area with no significant results. 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade HQs was struck with five rounds of mortar and 19 rounds of 107mm rocket fire.

Early on 18 August, 4 mi north of Tay Ninh City, US 25<sup>th</sup> Division troops, primarily **C Co 4<sup>th</sup> Bn 23<sup>rd</sup> Inf (M)**, including a platoon from 1<sup>st</sup> Bn 5<sup>th</sup> Inf and 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn, 34<sup>th</sup> Armor, and two batteries of artillery, at FSB Buell II came under attack by approx 100 rounds of 82mm mortar followed by an estimated two-battalion attack on the perimeter in "human waves." All weapons at the base responded including organic infantry, mech infantry, and artillery -- both 105mm and heavy. Helo gunships arrived in support, as did artillery from surrounding bases RAWLINS and STA BARBARA, and TAC AIR supplying both napalm and HE bombs. The enemy broke contact and retired to the northeast. Counterattacking base defenders found 105 dead attackers BC, took 13 wounded POWs, and recovered abundant arms and ammunition. 26 defenders were WIA in the assault, a self-propelled howitzer destroyed, and two tanks damaged in the battle. The attackers identified as 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 273<sup>rd</sup> Regiment and elements of the 178<sup>th</sup> Regiment, lost at least 105 killed, 13 wounded POWs, and abundant amount of arms including rifles, machine guns, RPG launchers and rockets, and assorted ammunition and equipment. On the mountain top, At 2:34 a.m. more than 3,000 feet above the surrounding lowlands, 25<sup>th</sup> Division signalers on Nui Ba Den were also attacked, including breaching the 3<sup>rd</sup> Bn 22<sup>nd</sup> Infantry bunkerline at one point, before being driven out and down the mountain. The attackers left behind 15 dead and their weapons, ammo, rockets, and satchel charges. **Randolph C. Kett of Charlie Company , 4<sup>th</sup> Bn (Mech) 23<sup>rd</sup> Inf was KIA this day, with the notation "Attack of FSB Buell, 9 km N Tay Ninh City."**

Later same day, **A and B Companies, 4<sup>th</sup> Bn 23<sup>rd</sup> Inf (M)** moved to a blocking position in the Long Hoa area near a bridge (XT270458) on the southeast edge of the city while Scout Platoon, 4<sup>th</sup> Bn (M) 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry accompanied A Co, 2<sup>nd</sup>/34<sup>th</sup> Armor to another blocking position at XT240447 in response to several VC Battalions entering Tay Ninh City. ARVN forces swept thru to clear and relieved by B Trp, 3/4 US Cav. **Task Force 4-23 (-)** aggressively attacked and became heavily engaged with enemy forces in a close fire fight from 1130 hrs until dark. They advanced approx 1000 meters into city and then held the blocking position. In street fighting, **TF 4-23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry** killed 42 enemy (body count), but the report notes 8 KIA, 35 WIA, and 2 APCs knocked out.

19 August -- the focus shifted to the area between Tay Ninh City and Dau Tieng. At 0930, 3/4th Cavalry troops, moving east on Highway 26, came under fire from an

enemy force entrenched in rice paddies along the road; 34 enemy died in six hours. Before the ¾ Cavalry were finished, the Bobcats were again attacked while moving through the Ben Cui Rubber. With Artillery support, 1/5<sup>th</sup> (M) joined, leaving a total 67 enemy killed. Around nightfall, a strong enemy force attacked the city from the southeast, initially overrunning an RF outpost. Also there were numerous attacks by fire around the AO on all sides of the city. Tropic Lightning units deployed in blocking positions around the city as ARVN forces moved thru flushing out the enemy. In the southeast part of the city, **A and B Companies 4<sup>th</sup> Bn 23d Infantry (Mech)** moved to blocking positions while one company of 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn 34<sup>th</sup> Armor reinforced with Scout Platoon, **4<sup>th</sup> Bn 23<sup>rd</sup> Inf (M)** moved to the southwest corner, and killed 12 enemy.

On 20 August, around 0945, **B Co 4<sup>th</sup> Bn 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry (M)**, sweeping along Rte 26 in the Cau Khoi Rubber (XT325470) approx 8km east of Tay Ninh City, contacted an enemy company near a bridge site. Support arrived from A Trp 3<sup>rd</sup> Squadron 4<sup>th</sup> Cav, along with 466 rounds of artillery, helo gunships, and TAC AIR, lasting to until about 1850 when the enemy withdrew. The enemy left behind 28 bodies and several small arms and machine guns. The two army units sustained four KIA and seven WIA.

**KIA this day from 4th Bn 23<sup>rd</sup> Inf (M) were: Freddie L. Couch, Robert W. Lais, and Raymond L Perez, all of Bravo Company.. The database notation is "Cau Khoi Plantation 8km E Tay Ninh City."**

Wed, 21 August, activity shifted back to Ben Cui and the Dau Tieng Base Camp as 1/5<sup>th</sup> (Mech). As they advanced through the rubber At 1254 hrs, an enemy battalion met them head on. Over the next 90 minutes, the enemy launched three human wave attacks. Supported by Artillery, gunships and TAC air, the Bobcats killed 182. 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, 25<sup>th</sup> US Infantry Division moved to Dau Tieng Base for the rest of August.

Same day, **Co A, 4<sup>th</sup> Bn 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry (M)** and A Trp, ¾ Cav came into conflict with an unknown size enemy force at 1502 hrs in a sweep in the Cau Khoi Rubber (355440). Helo gunships and TAC AIR supported. Result was 3 US were killed and five wounded. No enemy BC were located.

**A Co, 4<sup>th</sup> Bn 23<sup>rd</sup> Inf (M) lost Danny L Blake, KIA this day with the notation: "CAU KHOI PLANTATION, 12 KM E-SE OF TAY NINH CITY."**

Thursday, 22 August, enemy activity shifted back toward the city with an all-out attack on FSB Buell II costing the enemy an addition 60 killed, plus 11 wounded POWs, arms and ammunition. At FSB Rawlins, **Companies A & B 4th Battalion 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry (Mech)**, supported by arty, helo gunships, and TAC air, defended against an NVA/VC night attack. After several unsuccessful tries storming the wire, the enemy retired leaving 25 KIA [?], four WIA, four machine guns, two AK's, 42 rds RPG, 6 bangalores, 38 hand grenades, and 2100 rds small arms ammo. US losses: 1 KIA, 10 WIA. **Larry D. Cook of HHC was killed in action this day**

*From journal of (then) LTC Clifford Neilson, commanding 4/23<sup>rd</sup> Inf (M): 22 Aug - 1K 9W 1 Flame track C Co. OPCON 3/22. Unquiet nite - Mortar, rocket atk on FSB R at 0120 followed by ground attack from N thru rubber, from east & west along tree line. Arty fired Killer Jr. & Beehive. Gunships, flareships, air strikes. Battle died down finally 0430. No breach of perimeter. 46 BC. 2 RPG-7 & 2 RPG-2 launchers, 5 AK-47, 2RPD, 42 rds RPG-2, & 9 rds RPG-7. 4 POW.*

Following are from MACV daily press releases and do not identify units involved unless noted:

Saturday, 24 August, two 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division Fire Support Bases were attacked shortly after 0100. 60 attackers died at Buell II as they charged into point-blank Arty fire, and 25 enemy died at FSB Rawlings, 2 miles east of Tay Ninh City. At 20 minutes past midnight, five mi. southwest of Dau Tieng, 62 NVA soldiers died charging FSB Schofield. Also VC/NVA 88<sup>th</sup> Regt ambushed a logistics convoy on Rte 22, 7 km north of Go Dau Ha.

From the Operation Toan Thang II Phase II Report dated 3 March, 1969: On 25 August, enemy activity shifted to the area south of Tay Ninh when at 1145 hrs, the 88<sup>th</sup> VC/NVA Regt entered the fighting for the first time by ambushing the LONG BINH – CU CHI – TAY NINH logistic convoy along Rte 22 at XT349335, next to a rubber plantation 7 km north of Go Dau Ha. **Co C, 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion (M) 23<sup>rd</sup> Inf, B Trp ¾ Cav, and a company of 3<sup>rd</sup> Bn 22<sup>nd</sup> Inf** responded and the battle lasted through the afternoon and evening. No casualty figures given. [This is referred to as the “Convoy ambush at Ap Nhi” since the village of Ap Nhi lay a little to the west. – ed.]

From LTC Neilson’s Command Diary re this date and incident:

*"25 Aug 6+1.5=7.5 Quiet nite - 0700 -Bn formation. [Gave] HHC, A, B Co’s pep talk. B Co. opened road. R convoy escort for arty then DT-TN convoy. C Co. open road GDH-TN & FF [French Fort – ed.] . A Co. work on base camp defense.*

*1230. C Co 2d Plat heavy contact vic. S edge small rubber. Convoy attacked. C Co. (-) moved south. B-3/22 air landed in CP 182. B-3/4 moved up from south. B-3/4 linked up w/ C26 [call sign for 2nd Platoon leader, C Co.] heavy casualties, circled rubber. Linked w/ B-3/22. Drove north. Hit trench line at 1900 laager vic CP 182. C Co. (-) plus 1 plat B-3/4 initially laagered, then moved to GDH. 1 plat B Co. moved to Rock Crusher. Capt Housand, C-3/22, Lt Headley, B-3/4 2K [can not tell if the 2K entry refers to Housand and Headley], 15 W APC-C12 destroyed.*

*“Gone But Always Remembered*

*“ From the 4/23 KIA list*

**28. CPL Jeffrey Willis Pohjola, C Co [Both this and next line noted “CONVOY AMBUSHED QL22, 9 KM N-NW OF GO DAU HA]**

**29. CPL Patrick John Mc Cormick, C Co.**

*It [Aug 25 – ed.] started out as an absolutely normal day. I was in my chopper, "in charge" of seeing that the convoy got from Cu Chi to Tay Ninh just like we did 4-5 days a week. It was*

*Continuing LTC Neilson's Command Diary . . . . .*

*C Co's turn to sweep the road from TNBC to Ap Nhi and then outpost until the convoy rolled by. B Co was escorting arty to French Fort & A Co was on TNBC defense.*

*LTC (P) Wolfe, the BDE COMDR was off doing his thing somewhere in the TAOR when the attack began.*

*My first knowledge that something was wrong was when C Co C.O. (probably Capt Phillips) called and told me they were under attack. A nanosecond later, a flat bed truck loaded with pallets of artillery rounds exploded.*

*The website story tells what happened on the ground; someone did a great job in piecing the eye witness remembrances together. I remember LTC Wolf and I alternated command & control from our choppers, each having about 1 hour loiter time and a 1 hour roundtrip refueling period.*

*For reasons I do not remember, in the afternoon my chopper was switched at a refueling from a little LOH-6A to a big heavy Huey. I learned that Hueys were not nearly so maneuverable as LOH-6A and were a lot bigger target. We got hit by ground fire and luckily, we had a clean hole in each of the rotors about the same distance from the hub. This only made for a little vibration; I was told if it had been only one hole or the two holes were different distances from the hub, we would have lost the rotor - and us.*

*Two days later, LTC Wolfe was fired.*

*Cliff*

*\* \* \* \* \**

*Sep 29, 10*

*Bing -- We (third platoon, Charlie Company) were set up north of the ambush site doing routine road patrol. Typical day of sitting next to the road watching the world go by. Normally this was good duty, relax a little, clean weapons, write a letter or two, etc.*

*Maybe about noon or earlier we received a distress call from the first platoon (who were doing the same road patrol thing we were doing but to the south of us) that they had been ambushed and under attack.*

*We pulled out and proceeded south in support. I was the 50 gunner in the lead track heading down the road. It wasn't long before we started blowing by [meeting and passing] MP jeeps, and MP's pulled off to the side of the road. (I might add that their jeep mounted M60's set idle as they weaved and cheered us on as we charged down the road).*

*I myself had no idea that a convoy had been attacked, I thought it was the first platoon we were going to support. We came upon the first trucks in the convoy and it looked like ants attacking a picnic. I opened up with the 50 shooting the NVA looting the trucks,*

*everybody on our tracks jumped off and begin shooting and attacking the NVA. I have talked to several friends in recent years who where there that day.*

*A lot of mixed emotions for that day. I will continue this version soon. It was a difficult time and I am a little stressed at the moment.*

*Ron*

*Sep 25, 10*

*Doug: Glad I asked you to check; from this account, Spitler was flying a Huey gunship (predecessor to the Cobra) not a C & C ship (unless, under the circumstances they doubled up the missions which I doubt very much.)*

*I take it from the text that "Little Bear" was the general name for C & C missions and the gunships were "Diamondhead."*

*I would conclude that my "Little Bear" and his "Diamondhead" suffered similar damages to the rotor but were not the same ship.*

*I note in the section headed [hour] "1305" you injected a note to Neil about the identity of the 4-23 company commander. As Butch can attest, that was Captain Phillips who came out in LTC (P) Dukes "Little Bear" C & C.*

*That should be sent to the author as well as the correction that Duke was a LTC (Promotable), not a Colonel.*

*Cliff*

*Oct 11, 2010*

*This is my memory of what happened around me on the day of the ambush. There were differently two different battles that happened that day. Having talked about this battle and many others with the guys who were there during my time, we came to the conclusions that although we were in the same area at the same time different things were happening up and down the line. So our memories differ due to what we were doing and facing at the time. We were at the head of the convoy, north end, and the first platoon were at the end of the convey, the south end. I do not remember any gunships in our area. That is just me thinking, could have been a swarm of gunships in our neck of the woods, but I just don't remember. I was really busy and don't remember much except trying to survive. From the stories I have heard, the gunships must have been down south along with all the other action.*

*Well, there we were, all dressed up and nowhere to go. We were vastly outnumbered by the NVA, so there wasn't much we could do about advancing down the road. I cannot remember the time frame but eventually a leg unit showed up (dropped off by helicopters) and joined us for the initial assault. It was probably an hour or so before we were all settled in. We (APC's) were in line on the road and the leg unit and our guys on the ground lined up to the right and left to form a T. Someone hollered Geronimo or move out or whatever, but away we went. We advanced towards the village and the convoy, everyone firing at the same time.*

*I have no memory of the fighting as we advanced through the village. My first memory of the assault was breaking out on the south side of the village facing the rubber plantation on the left side of the road and observing a whole lot of NVA soldiers in the rubber. There were NVA everywhere; these guys were dressed in khaki clothing with safari hats. I was shooting the 50 at everything that moved, about this time RPG's started coming from a location about fifty meters down the road.*

*They shot high and I can recall three going about six feet over our heads. I remember reading an after action report from the leg unit saying the NVA fired RPG's over their heads that were intended to knock them out. OK, maybe so, but I took it kind of personal and proceeded to dump as many rounds as I could in area where I saw the white smoke. No more RPG's were fired that day in our neighborhood.*

*Then things got worse, in the track behind us the driver was wounded and was pulled out and taken to the rear and the 50 ceased to function (a story that I was told a couple of years ago by the person who cleaned that weapon just prior to our moving out, he forget to set the head space and timing) the track was dead in the water, so it became a little dicey for the driver and I in track 32. With the road blocked behind us by the trucks and the track we were stuck in the middle of the road on our own. Admittedly we did try to back up and get the hell out of there, but there was no place to go. I can recall the thud when we rammed the disabled track behind us when the driver of our track tried to get us a little breathing room (the only name I remember him by was Lite, [Leight?] not sure of the spelling or if that was his first or last name or just a nickname), but you couldn't ask for a better person to be with you in the fix that we were in. I guess we could have abounded our track and got out, but we never really considered that option. I just kept shooting the 50 and Lite kept clipping more rounds to the belt, without getting into the blood and guts of the battle, we just kept shooting. You can't hide behind a rubber tree and come out unsheathed when someone is firing a 50 caliber machine at you from the other side. This went on for what seemed like a very long time. During this time period I was later accused of trying to shoot down the little bubble helicopter of some big wig hovering above us. Cliff, Wolf, I don't know. What happen was a hot 50 shell fell into my boot and burned the crap out of the front of my ankle and shin. I had stopped wearing socks and boot laces because my feet never seemed to dry out. I received one hell of a blister form that. The problem was that I was shooting nonstop and when the shell landed in my boot I started jumping up and down because of the pain and the 50 ended up pointing up in the air firing away because I was still holding down on the butterfly trigger. Well, at least I didn't hit anything up in the sky, I guess that's good. Bullets where hitting the steel plates around the 50 and the NVA were advancing up the gully next to the road, I couldn't hit them with the 50 because I didn't have the angle, so I held my 16 over the steel plates and started shooting. About this time(thank god) the ground troops showed up, led by our fearless leader, our third platoon leader Lt. Rio (very good guy). Lt. Rio later told me he shot the NVA in the gully with his 45, I mentioned that I also was firing my 16 in the general area. We agreed that one of us, or both must have gotten them. This was probably one of Lt. Rio's last battles, his six months were about up, he did tell me that the scene after this battle was one of the worst he had seen in his time over there. He might have changed his mind after our encounters at Buell in the next couple of weeks. Well, enough of that.*

*We had maybe 200-300 rounds of 50 ammo left, I think this might have set a personnel record for me of rounds fired from a single weapon in a battle. (I beat that record a few weeks later at Beull, but it involved two 50's).*

*I have several pictures of the battle (at the north end). If I can figure out how to*

scan them and post them I think it might help show the general situation at the front of the convoy. A picture of a lot of trucks lined up and down the road, black smoke trailing up way down the road (the south end of the convoy, I assume) and a lot of trucks with a whole lot of bullet holes. A picture of the L shaped tunnels they dug into the back of the rice paddy berm that ran parallel to the road. I recall on our way from Cu Chi to our new home in Tay Ninh we noticed this particular berm (four feet high at least, with the rubber trees behind) and commented as to what an exceptional place for an ambush). If memory serves me correct, the engineers plowed that berm down a couple of weeks after the ambush.

The spoils of war: There were a lot of bullet holes in all the trucks we encountered during our sweep after the fighting stopped. We found one Igloo cooler that wasn't shot up, at our level of the supply chain this was a major find. We secured it in track 32, filled it with ice and appropriate beverages and off we went to new adventures. Five days later track 32 was hit by a RPG, blew me out the top and hit Leite [name] in the back. We were both evac'd out to parts unknown and spent two days at some Evac hospital. When we made our way back to Tay Ninh and the company area we found track 32 still functioning but with a hole in the side and several out the back right side. Seems the RPG that hit us was a dud, the secondary explosion didn't happen, just the primary, the burn through. That's good; I might not be writing this if that was not the case. I also have a picture of me pointing at the RPG entry hole on track 32.

The bad news: the Igloo cooler died, riddled with holes.

Bing, we had an encounter of the scary kind with a gunship on September 16th (yes, we were at that one also). It's a little more involved so I will continue later.

Ron

Oct 12, 2010

Bing

Thank you for appreciating our efforts over there, it is nice to hear a thank you once in a while for our efforts.

Unfortunately, thank yous are few and far between for us. Thanks again. I suspect your brother was at the south end of the convey, I am sure I would have noticed a gunship or two if they had been at the north end. Remember, we were trying to get to them, we were not ambushed, but attempting to come to their aid, like everyone else. Captain Phillips was never in our area at the north during the fighting, but I suspect was trying to salvage the mess down south. I have read some accounts of the ambush that claim the NVA were lined up about a mile along the road. This might account for the differences in the stories about this encounter. I have to find the pictures I have, they might help shed some light on the distances involved. I will try to explain some of the happenings on Sept. 16 to you. Your bother may be able to answer some of my questions about that day because he was there and possible remembers one of the more interesting parts of that battle that involved a few of us and a gunship. I would really like to know. We may have to talk about this outside of this environment because of the fact that you have to be nice on this message board because nobody wants to really know the truth about some of the ASSHOLES that got a lot of people killed that day. Sorry, I was there and I know

*what happened (along with the other survivors I have talk to that day). I think we had seven KIA and eight wounded (some real bad) that day (myself included). All from the third platoon. So much for a restful night tonight, sorry Bing, sometimes this stuff gets a little difficult to deal with. I appreciated your interest.*

*Ron*

\* \* \* \* \*

*TL News 16 September, 1968*

### ***Fast Moves Crush Enemy Ambushers***

*Elements from the 1st Brigade, 25th Infantry Division, killed 96 North Vietnamese Army soldiers in fighting along the main supply route, Highway 22, six miles northwest of Go Dau Ha. The Tropic Lightning soldiers smashed an enemy ambush which had trapped a portion of the Cu Chi to Tay Ninh resupply convoy.*

*The NVA soldiers were dug-in along the highway in an area known as the "Little Rubber." The enemy ambushers allowed most of the large American convoy to pass before springing their trap, which pinned down 25 of the resupply trucks.*

*The fighting began just before noon as elements of Company C, 4th Battalion (Mechanized), 23d Infantry, and Military Police gun jeeps escorting the convoy held off the attackers.*

*Company C of the 3d Battalion, 22d Infantry was on eagle flight operations north of Tay Ninh City when they were directed to join the battle. The infantrymen were flown to a position just north of the fire fight, landing in rice paddies on the eastern side of the road. As the Regulars jumped from the helicopters, they were hit with several volleys of enemy mortar fire.*

*Company C commander, Captain James Hansard of Plainview, Tex., deployed two of his platoons on each side of the road. Under a constant sniper fire, they swept through an area which separated them from the NVA positions in the "Little Rubber."*

*The two platoons on the eastern side of the highway made their way to the edge of the rubber trees. Staff Sergeant James Allen of Louisville, Ky., stated, "By the time we reached the rubber trees we began receiving RPG rounds.*

*The NVA were firing them into the trees above our heads so the shrapnel would shower down on us."*

*As Platoon Sergeant Fred Painter from Pontiac, Mich., and his men moved into the rubber, they were greeted by an unusual NVA trick. "We spotted what appeared to be American troops along a berm, wearing green uniforms, helmets and goggles. They were standing up waving for us to come over to their position. They turned out to be NVA who had taken the helmets and goggles from the trapped convoy trucks. They opened up on us, and we all had to hit the dirt," recalled Painter.*

*Just inside the tree line, the platoons ran into a U-shaped ambush. "The NVA were dug into a high berm running parallel to a deep ditch on our right flank. We were receiving sniper fire from the trees on our left flank and rounds were coming directly at us from another ditch to our front," said Hansard.*

*Tanks and APC's from B Troop, 3d Squadron, 4th Cavalry, called up from Cu Chi, and tracks from the 4th Battalion (Mechanized), 23d Infantry, came up on line with their guns blazing to support the infantrymen.*

*Another platoon from the 3d Battalion, 22d Infantry, on the western side of the*



*highway moved across the road, using the disabled convoy vehicles for cover. As they moved through the trucks they pulled wounded Americans to safety.*

*According to Staff Sergeant William Landman of Granite City, Ill., "We moved through the trucks and got into the rubber. Part of my platoon acted as spotters shouting directions while the rest of us tossed hand grenades into the spider holes. In some cases we just rolled the grenades down the berm into the holes."*

*The fighting eased, and the Americans set up night positions on both sides of the "Little Rubber." The next day, they counted 96 dead enemy.*

\* \* \* \* \*

**Captain Henry R. Phillips** commanded **C Co.** during this combat encounter and for his actions earned the **Distinguished Service Cross**, which was awarded posthumously . . . Quoted below are excerpts from the DSC citation providing additional details of the action:

*" . . . his company and a convoy that it was supporting were ambushed by two North Vietnamese Army battalions...Captain Phillips flew to the scene of the battle and jumped to the ground from his hovering helicopter amid intense enemy fire. Finding that his first platoon was in danger of being overrun, he quickly gathered a force to assist the threatened element and halted the advance of the communist. As he was leading a counterattack to secure a landing zone for an ambulance helicopter, he and his men came under heavy rocket-propelled grenade and automatic weapons fire from the flank. Grabbing four light antitank weapons, he moved through the hostile fusillade to a point from which he was able to destroy a rocket-propelled grenade team and an automatic weapons position.*

*Once the casualties were safely evacuated, Captain Phillips led a small group of volunteers into the killing zone of the ambush to extract several remaining dead and wounded personnel. He then organized a withdrawal as darkness set in and although wounded by an enemy rocket-propelled grenade, succeeded in leading his men to an allied command ."*

\* \* \* \* \*

Observation by Donn Starry from "Mounted Combat in Vietnam," Chapter 5, concerning three enemy offensives (Tet 68 and following): The most sustained fighting of this third offensive took place in the III CTZ in Tay Ninh Province. By August 16,000 soldiers of the 5th and 9th VC and NVA Divisions had infiltrated into War Zone C, prepared to attack. The 1st Brigade, 25th Infantry Division, the largest free world force in the area, included the 1/5<sup>th</sup> Infantry (M); **4th Battalion, 23d Infantry (Mechanized)** ; 3d Bn, 22d Infantry; 2d Bn, 34th Arm (-) ; and the 2d Bn 27th Infantry.

"Relying on the mobility of its armored units, the brigade was organized into combined arms task forces with attached tank, infantry, and mech infantry units heavily supported by artillery. From the fire bases around Tay Ninh City task forces sent out wide-ranging patrols to prevent or break up enemy movement. For ten hectic days and nights beginning 17 August 68, the 1st Brigade fought the enemy over an

area of 1,500 sq km in unfavorable summer wet weather. The fight started when the enemy made a night attack on a FSB six km N of Tay Ninh, using human wave tactics; the attackers were stopped short of the defensive wire by the over-whelming firepower of tanks, aircraft, artillery, and infantry. By daylight a heavy attack on Tay Ninh City was under way, but at the end of the day the enemy had been beaten back by two armored task forces and a cavalry troop. The enemy then shifted thirty kilometers to the east into some rubber plantations in the hope of bypassing the brigade and striking farther south. But the mobile task forces followed, and for nine days fighting raged through the rows of rubber trees. Counterattack followed attack with such regularity that it became difficult to tell which was which. The only certainty was that the brigade was keeping the pressure on. Movement and firepower were the keys, aided in strong measure by the unity of command within the brigade. In almost every fight, and they took place every day and every night, the enemy was severely beaten. There were exceptions. On 21 August a mechanized infantry company took on two North Vietnamese battalions and for more than an hour held its own. After suffering heavy losses and with one officer left alive, the company was forced to withdraw under cover of supporting artillery. Again, on 25 August a logistical convoy of eighty-eight vehicles was ambushed S of Tay Ninh. An armored force moved in and severely punished the enemy, but not before the convoy had lost many men and vehicles. In these actions the VC and NVA prevailed by weight of numbers.

"By 27 Aug the third enemy offensive in War Zone C had ended in defeat for enemy units. It was largely the mobility and firepower of the 1st Brigade combined arms teams that made victory possible for the smaller American forces. The ability of U.S. forces to maneuver and mass rapidly to defeat a strong but slower enemy was the critical factor. The attacks were the last in the III Corps Tactical Zone. For the remainder of the year and well into the next the enemy stayed in Cambodia refitting badly beaten units."

\* \* \* \* \*

***Earl S. Bazemore of C Co was KIA, August 26, 1968. [Info not associated in files with specific place or circumstances.. – ed.]***

***August William Pojola, and Patrrick J. McCormich were KIA this day in the convoy ambush.***

\* \* \* \* \*

**From 25<sup>th</sup> Inf Division AAR for "Battle of Tay Ninh":** On 27 August, The 88<sup>th</sup> NVA/VC Regiment reappeared at 0040 hrs when it staged an estimated two battalion attack on FSB Rawlins. The base, defended by **4<sup>th</sup> Bn (M), 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry**, commanded by LTC Clifford Neilson initially came under massive attack of about 200 mortar rounds and fifty 107 mm rockets. This was followed closely by a ground attack. Supported by artillery, helo gunships, "Spooky" gunships, and TAC AIR, the defenders stopped the enemy attack short of the wire, forcing withdrawal at about 0300 hrs. A sweep of the at first light discovered 27 enemy dead an three wounded

prisoners, plus rifles, RPG launchers RPG warheads, and 60mm mortar ammo, and bangalore torpedoes for breaching wire defenses. Fifteen defenders were wounded.

*Also on 27 August, Col Robert L. ("Big Bob") Fair assumed command of 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, US 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division.*

\* \* \* \* \*

*Resuming from LTC Neilson's journal: 27 Aug - 10W 27BC 56<sup>th</sup> Mal Pill. Capt Montgomery back in country. Unquiet nite - Mortar, RPG, Rocket attack on FSB 0030-0100. Ground attack from NE, W, SE. Arty fired 1400 rds Killer Jr, 10 W (plus 4 arty), BC 27. 5 RPG launchers, 3 MG 7, 6 AK47.*

*Aug 5, 03*

*Cliff, As I recall, it was around the time of the Tay Ninh Offensive that CPT Montgomery went on R&R. He left with a full complement of tracks, officers and around 140 men foxhole strength. When he returned a week later, there were 4 tracks, no officers around 90 men fox hole strength and I believe an artillery LT as acting CO. That was one hell of a week for Alpha.*

*Gary*

*Oct 20, 03*

*I just finished reading all the messages about FSB [Rawlins.]. You and I must have been in another part of Nam or a different unit, We didn't have any of them luxuries when we were at Rawlins. From what I remember (during the combat era) is: . 1. Your quarters was a Tent no A.C. and no extra amenities. 2. There was a BIG HOLE dug where TOC & Arty tracks were down in, and both rears of their tracks faced each other with some wood put over the ground and a few chairs and a big piece of canvas over the top of area where the chairs were. You had to walk down in the hole to get to them. 3. Mess hall was tents & enlisted stood while they ate. Officers of course sat down while eating. 4. Donut Dolly meeting area -- where the hell was that? Must have missed that one. 5. ,The daily briefing area was one large tent ,one side was the briefing area, the other side was the sleeping area for the housecats. 6. Showers: you had to fill them 55 gallon drums up every day. 7. A.C. in TOC: holy shit, now I know you and I were there for the combat era. 8. Water purification station: now I know we weren't at that FSB, It was a big ole water tanker truck for your water. 9. Oh and plenty of Shi- to burn, or did they have flushing toilets for them?? Cliff did I leave anything out, or should I mention that you really had a two story tent with bay windows all around the second floor and AC, of course over looking beautiful downtown Rawlins.*

*John. K*

*Recon 68-69*

*Jan 9, 04*

*Guys: -- Battalion Commanders had 6 months to do two missions: 1) Engage in as much combat as they could find and kill as many enemy as possible while 2) losing*

*the minimum number of US lives. (Reflecting back on my 6 months, me and you guys mostly did this)*

*Cliff*

*Feb 23, 07*

*When MG Williamson arrived in August 1968, I had commanded the 4-23 for about 3 months. Little did he or I - or some of you guys that were there for the action - know that shortly we would be engaged in what became known as the Battle of Tay Ninh (I, II, or III depending on when you got to fight for that God forsaken piece of earth).*

*Very early in his tenure he visited all the battalions and gave the commanders this guidance: "Steel is cheap, American flesh & blood is precious. No soldier is to die because someone said the Rules of Engagement specified you (me) could not use every bit of available firepower to keep him alive." And that's what we did. At the first shot-and this was particularly true of convoy ambushes -- we took up defensive positions and brought down the "hammers of hell" on the shooter, his friends, perhaps inadvertently, the villagers with whom he was intermingled and their house he was using for cover. Artillery, helicopter gunships, and tactical air pounded the piss out of them.*

*Then we went back in. If anyone started shooting at us again, we stopped and repeated the process for as long as it took. The only exception I remember was the action at the Cao Dai temple in Sep 68; Butch (Sincoc) can tell you about that.*

*I deeply regret the KIA and WIA that occurred in those battles. I am sure that had not "Butch" (his nickname but I never called him that!) Williamson been so adamant about sparing infantry blood, a lot of you guys who are on this board and were in 25 ID during his command would not be here now.*

*Rest in peace, Lighting 6.*

*Cliff N.*

*Mohawk 6*

\* \* \* \* \*

The enemy's presence in the area continued between 28 August and 10 September as indicated by "light harassing attacks" [25<sup>th</sup> Division AAR choice of words. – ed] of small units on allied sweeping forces. **On 10 September, Ronald G Hack of A Co, 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon was KIA.** [Not associated in files with specific place or event.. – ed.]

11 Sep 68, the lull ended before dawn when the Ben Cui Rubber Plantation erupted to exploding mortar shells. The NDP of 1/5<sup>th</sup> Inf (M) three miles south of Dau Tieng was the target of an est enemy battalion. The Bobcats called in artillery, counter-attacked, and in three hours killed 99 of the enemy.

Same day, **Companies A and B, 4<sup>th</sup> Bn (M) 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry** were sweeping thru an area along the eastern base of Nui Ba Den around 1645 hrs when they came in contact with an est enemy company. Tomahawks were supported by helo gunships and TAC AIR. When the pushed through the area formerly occupied by the enemy no enemy casualties were in evidence. Our forces suffered two KIA and 7 WIA.

**David O. Painter and Kestutis K. Petrauskas both of B Co were reported killed in action on 11 Sep 68, location noted "E Side Base of Nui Ba Den."**

On 12 September. A pre-dawn attack made against the guns at FSB Pope 15 miles NW of Cu Chi. 3rd Bde, 101st Abn Div, still opcon to the 25th Division conducted the defense. The final count was 131 enemy dead.

Later the same day, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade continued its operations beyond the city with the exception of **A and B Companies, 4<sup>th</sup> Bn (M), 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry**, who late in the day moved into blocking positions to the immediate west of Tay Ninh City at Xt1849-2049 to support Vietnamese Marines in that vicinity. At 1035 hrs a northbound CU CHI-TAY NINH logistical convoy came under enemy fire from 88<sup>th</sup> VC/NVA Regiment on Route 22, 10 km south of TAY NINH CITY. **A Co, 4<sup>th</sup> Bn (M) 23rd Inf** responded quickly along with B Troop,  $\frac{3}{4}$  Cav. US artillery and TAC AIR supported during the fight which lasted through the day. Several other units from diverse organizations responded later, and by the end, 23 enemy dead were confirmed, and 7 captured, plus rifles and machine guns. US casualties were three killed and 11 wounded.

**KIA this day: Leonard J. Liparto, HHC, noted "Rte 4, 3 km North of Nui Ba Den. [possibly spelled Liparoto. - ed.]**

Next day, 13 September, 0200 hrs, the enemy hit FSB Buell II hard. A mortar barrage estimated at over 50 rounds per minute at peak intensity hit the camp at 0150 hrs. Waves of attackers flung themselves at the position. More than 1,000 105 mm howitzer rds were fired in their faces from point-blank range by 2/13th Arty. Other defenders included 3/22d Inf and 2/27th Inf. The enemy fled 3 hours later leaving 76 dead behind. FSB Santa Barbara was hit with 33 rounds 82mm mortar at 0945. **Company Co, 4th Bn,(M), 23rd Inf** swept through an area nine km east of the city (XT3544-4 digit) where at 1155 hrs it encountered an est enemy company. Reinforced by helo gunships, artillery and TAC AIR, the mech company forced the enemy to withdraw toward the north, leaving behind 6 dead. US sustained 1 KIA and 6 WIA. **Database note in conjunction with 4th Bn, 23rd Infantry three men KIA: Kenneth G. Cushman, Joe A. Elbert, and Edward K Ryan as A/65TH ENG, RT 4, 3 KM N OF NUI BA DEN 19680913**

\* \* \* \* \*

*LTC Neilson's notes for this day: 13 Sep - Quiet nite (Buell attacked) - A Co. secure FSB Hull, open Rt 22 to CP 04; B Co. escort resupply to CP 31, pick up Engr & take down to craters vic [CP] 03 & 04, outpost; C Co. open Rt 26. R at RC; open road to TN, escort Engr vehicles back & forth to RC. A (-) & B Cos, & R - neg. contact. (Convoy rolled south only.) Engr work accomplished. C Co. contact vic. CP 36 - AS, arty & gun ship. 1 KIA, 3 WIA - 12 BC, 10 wpns. A Co. plat - ambushed XT285655 5K K south of FF -*

*2 KIA (LT Elbert, 1 medic; 2 LRP. 1 Engr Marino), 9 WIA, Brought plt back to FF. Arty, gunships & AS. Lost 1 APC. 88<sup>th</sup> NVA [Regiment, identity of the attacking force.]*

Same entry he retrospectively notes - The entry above "Brought plt back to FF" pales to insignificance concerning the circumstances surrounding it. I was in my C & C chopper with the Arty LNO, Captain Ken Koy, and the BCSM, John Wise over Charlie Company. There was heavy contact at CP 36 and I was coordinating fire support for them when I got the call about the ambush, probably from Captain Montgomery, Alpha Co. Comdr. I do not know how he knew about it because the ambushed platoon had no reliably operating radio and A Co. was many miles away. I transferred fire support coordination responsibilities to Col. Fair, 1<sup>st</sup> BDE Co who was in his chopper in the vicinity and had my pilot fly the chopper to the ambush site.

When I arrived I saw 3 APCs on the road with troops milling about and someone waving at the chopper pointing at his PRC-25 radio. It turned about to be the Platoon Sergeant who I later discovered had 20 months in the Army and 8 in RVN. I finally contacted him on the company net and through very broken transmissions, he told me that his was the only operable radio in the platoon, the platoon leader had been killed, there were several wounded on the APC with him, and a wounded trooper with a fourth APC disabled at the ambush site further north toward FF.

I had the chopper land next to the road with the intention of giving the platoon sergeant the ARTY LNO's PRC-25 so that he could have radio contact with me as he led the platoon back to FF. I gave him the radio and instructions to take the platoon back up the road, stop at the ambush site and recover the wounded trooper, and then continue to the "French Fort". It became obvious to me that such a mission was too much to lay on the shoulders of a well meaning but inexperienced NCO when so many lives were at stake. I quickly decided I could not abandon the platoon in such a precarious position and that I would lead them back to FF.

I had the platoon mount up with every weapon on top of the APC loaded and ready to fire. The .50 cal machine gun on APC 1 covered to the front; APC 2 covered to the left; and APC 3 to the right. An M60 machine gunner covered to the rear from APC 3. Everyone else lay down on top and arranged themselves to fire alternately left or right.

In the meantime, the ARTY LNO arranged for artillery to cover both sides of the road and began the fire missions before we were ready to leave. A USAF TAC showed up and started scrambling Air Force fighter-bombers.

We moved up the road at top speed, not knowing the exact ambush site location. We "hosed down" both sides of the road until we got to the inoperable APC. We stopped, everyone hit the ground, stripped it of radios, weapons, and ammunition and looked for the wounded trooper. We could not find him and presumed the NVA had captured him.

We reloaded and continued to FF. Fighter bombers laid napalm down on either side of the road and as soon as they finished the artillery started again. We pulled into FF without a scratch, got off the APC, and the NVA started mortaring the Fire Base. Several troopers were wounded.

I got back in my chopper and returned to the Charlie Co. action.

In my 6 months of command, this is as close as I ever got to engaging in combat at the "grunt" level.

As we roared up the road firing wildly I do not recall that anyone shot back!

AFTERMATH:

*The wounded man had been rescued by some nearby villagers in the field but he died; we recovered his body the next day from them at the same time we fixed the disabled APC.*

*COL Fair found out what I had done and really chewed me out for using bad judgment since I was a Battalion Commander not a Platoon Leader. Then he assured me that he would have done the same thing.*

*I received my second Silver Star. My real reward came when the platoon sergeant came up to me in the chow line several days later with tears in his eyes and thanked me.*

*"All in a day's work in Tay Ninh Province."*

*Cliff*

\* \* \* \* \*

Elsewhere in the area during the day, FSB STE BARBARA was struck by 33 rounds of mortar fire. Later in the morning, **Company Co, 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 23<sup>rd</sup> Inf (Mech)** swept thru an area 9 miles east of Tay Ninh City where at 1155 hrs they contacted an enemy infantry company (est.) Supported by artillery, helo gunships, and TAC AIR they prevailed and the enemy withdrew to the north. Six enemy dead were located.

At 1340 hrs of 13 September **A Company, 4<sup>th</sup> of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry (Mech)** on a sweep of Route 4, three km north of Nui Ba Den was ambushed and sustained 5 KIA and 10 WIA. The company was supported by helo gunships and artillery, but enemy losses could not be ascertained. [Ed Note – may be wrong Bn cited. We don't show that level of casualties that day at that location.]

**Tomahawks KIA this day included: Kenneth G. Cushman, HHC, Lt John A. Elbert, Alpha Co, Edward K. Ryan, A Co, are all noted "Rte 4, 3 km N Nui Ba Den."** [Ed note -- KIA dates are from "Coffelt Database" and do not always accord with other reports. ]

On 14 September, at the Cau Khoi Rubber plantation southeast of Tay Ninh City, **B Co, 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Mechanized), 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry** and C Co, 1<sup>st</sup> Bn 5<sup>th</sup> Inf (Mech) were conducting a sweep and contacted an estimated enemy Battalion. A running battle continued throughout the day supported by helo gunships, artillery and TAC AIR. After the enemy were driven off two enemy bodies were located. US lost 7 and had 8 WIA (organizations not specified.) Robert P. Walsh, B Co was KIA this day, noted "Rte 26, 9km E Tay Ninh City."

\* \* \* \* \*

*LTC Neilson's journal notes: 14 Sep - Special prom*

*1 E6 1*

*10 E5 111*

*5 E4 11*

*Quiet nite - A Co. (-) opened Rt 22. R at RC, reinforce A Co. (Lt. Bennett Plt Ldr). B & C Co's open Rt 26. B Co. in contact 1200 hrs vic CP 25. Arty, air, gun ships,*

until 1820. 1 KIA, 5 WIA B Co. 1 WIA C Co. 2 AK-47 A - 5 NVA graves BC damaged 1 APC.

Cu Chi-TN-Cu Chi convoy ran both ways

DT-TN convoy one way to TN

SP-4 Hust, Brent B Co. BS "V"

SP-4 Ferguson, Daniel B Co. BS "V"

16 September saw another convoy ambushed in the Cau Khoi, eight km east of Tay Ninh, and the DAU TIENG-TAY NINH Logistical convoy was attacked. **Co 4<sup>th</sup> Bn 23<sup>rd</sup> Inf (M)** responded, as did artillery, helo gunships, and TAC AIR. After the enemy was driven off, two bodies were recovered. Casualties were seven US killed and eight wounded in the attack.

**Records from 16 September, 1968 indicates these Charlie Company Tomahawks were KIA: Joseph R. Brown, Donald E. Glime; Ralph W. Kuchinski; James R. Miller, Dale A. Morrow; Alfred V. Schofield, and Anthony R. Signa, all noted "Ambush in Cau Khoi Rubber Plantation."**

LTC Neilson Notes: 16 Sep - 59<sup>th</sup> malaria. Unquiet nite - 6 mortar rds at 0200 - no cas. A Co. & Recon - open Rt 22. B Co. (-) & C Co. (-) open Rt 26. 1 plat B Co. stand down. 1 plat C Co. escort resupply.

Road open 0810

Convoy up - 0945

Convoy down - 1400

[Then all hell broke loose on Rt 26 when the 4/23 suffered the most KIA in one day while I was its commander.]

DT to TN convoy hit vic CP 36 (coord XT354441) at 1230. Gunships, arty (956 rds), AS, CS [incapacitating tear gas] [incapacitating tear gas. 2 APC destroyed, 1 APC damaged; 1 ST tractor truck destroyed. Several vehicles dam. 7 KIA, 6 WIA, no body count.

A letter from an unnamed Tomahawk is also appended "I knew James Miller; we called him Red. We were both in the third platoon, Charlie Company. He was KIA on September 16<sup>th</sup> 1968 when our platoon was ambushed on Route 26. We had 7 KIA and 8 WIA (myself included) that day. Started the day with 22 men and 3 APC's, two APC's were completely destroyed by satchel charges and the third got hit with a RPG. Red was a good guy and is remembered fondly by the other guys that I have been in contact with from the third platoon."

Jan 10, 2004

A bad day for Tomahawk; My diary entry for that date follows; words in bold are the actual words; [ ] is explanation where available.

"16 Sept [I noted that this was my 32<sup>nd</sup> day which combat occurred since taking command on 13 May.] Unquiet night. 6 mortar rds at 0200. No cas. A Co. & Recon - open Rt. 22; B(-) & C (-) open Rt. 26. 1 plat B stand down.

1 plt C escort resupply. DT to TN [Dau Tieng to Tay Ninh] convoy hit vic CP 36 (XT354441) 1230. Gunships, arty (956) [do not know what this means], AS



*[airstrikes], CS [irritating tear gas], 2 APC destroyed, 1 APC damaged, 1 ST Tractor Truck destroyed, several vehicles damaged. 7 KIA, 6 WIA, no body count. "*

*I have entered into the transcription, that in a 10 January 2004 message, Carl B. has identified one of the KIA as Lt. Al. Schofield.*

*Anyone else identify KIA or WIA from this action?*

*Cliff Neilson*

*Mohawk 6 May-Nov 68*

*Jan 9, 04*

*Whoops,*

*There's egg on my face, as I mistakenly put Capt Lincoln's name on my message where I meant Capt Phillips. The memorial service of which I spoke was for Capt Henry Phillips, not for his successor, Capt Lincoln. In my message I spoke of both and got the names confused. My apologies.*

*As to your question regarding my service, I was Charlie 26 from about the middle of August 68 until, I think about November. I then went to become the Liaison Officer to Phouc Cuong (sp?) district headquarters which was downtown Tay Ninh. I believe Col. Neilson gave me that job as I was about the senior Lt. in the field and I had taught tactics at Benning. While there [the new colonel] took over the battalion. In the states, Nixon got elected and the "Vietnamization Program" went into effect. [The new colonel] came out to the Vietnamese District Headquarters to talk to the MACV advisors and Tia Tau Mauc (sp?). Mauc (sp?) was the district governor, a major, and it was to him and the MACV people that I was to be the liaison to and to provide support and combined missions with, between 4/23 and the local forces he commanded.*

*[The colonel] told me about the CRIP platoon idea and wanted me to take it as I had the field time and was already down at the headquarters where the CRIP platoon was to be established. When he told me what the beginning concept was, I told him I didn't want the job. Man, he blew up. I guess he's never had a young lieutenant tell him no before. Told him I'd opt to go back to Charlie Company.*

*He said I sure as hell was going back to the field but he'd not give me a choice. He put me back to Bravo Co. Capt. Marlow, I think was the CO. Had a platoon with Bravo, don't remember which one, for a few weeks and a couple or so weeks with the mortar platoon. OH! During that time [the Colonel] had a couple more chances at me and he made sure that nothing good would happen to/for me. But that was OK too. What were they going to do, draft me and send me to Viet Nam?*

*I guess sometime in Jan '69, a provisional company was formed in Headquarters Company to take over the guarding of Nui Ba Den. You had to have only five months left in country or had been wounded twice and they let finish your tour on the mountain. I was one of the three platoon leaders on top of the mountain until I came home in July'69.*

*A couple of times, maybe just once, I was with Recon while the platoon leader went on leave or R&R. I was with them strictly on a temporary basis, based out of the Rock Crusher. Would like to know the Recon platoon leader's name. He was a pretty good guy, my impression from only meeting him a few times. He was the one that walked into [the Colonel's] tail rotor and got hurt pretty bad. Another platoon leader kept up with him for a while and I had heard that he was alright, but didn't really know*

for sure.

*Well, you asked the question and I got carried away and told everything you didn't need to know. I remember a few names and have a few pictures.*

*A Comment: Looking through the messages on this board covering the last few months, it's obvious that we all saw things differently. I've seen a few accounts of incidents that occurred while I was there and took part in. Just amazed at the differences. Don't know that anyone is wrong or mistaken, just different perspectives, I guess. Makes it all the more interesting.*

*Respectfully,  
Carl G. Berning  
Jan 11, 2004*

*Cliff,*

*Roger that! as to your question, reference is made in message #1264 on this site.*

*As I remember that date, & I'll probably get myself in trouble again here. We were securing the road. My platoon, the 2nd, had the road East to the end of the woodline on the right side going toward Dau Tieng. Third platoon, Al Schofield's, had from there to the corner that turned generally North where, I think we usually met up with the 1st the 5th Mech from Dau Tieng. Is that right? And then someone would run with the convoy.*

*While waiting for the convoy we would pull off of our secure stations periodically and run the road of our assigned area to insure that Charles had not moved in to set up an ambush or set mines.*

*Al's third platoon made a run to have a look-see and the convoy came down the road and they had to get along side of the road on the shoulder and let the convoy pass. We really couldn't get into that large grassy clearing on South side as the ground too soft.*

*The NVA made a running ambush stopping only to disable a couple of trucks in the convoy. Unfortunately, those disabled trucks were right where the third platoon was stopped. Some of the convoy drivers un-assed their trucks as they were sitting ducks. That probably saved their lives.*

*As the NVA ran to the trucks they were firing directly at the third platoon on the other side (the South side) but I'm sure no one on the tracks could get a clear shot at anyone due to their being right along side of the trucks. Al was on the radio and an RPG got him.*

*From where we found everybody most were wounded or killed right at, on, or around the two tracks. Some were wounded and kept fighting as they were bandaged.*

*It all took place in two to three minutes and the NVA never stopped running. I think they ran right through the convoy and the platoon and into the open area and then to the woods. We, or at least I, never saw a one, due to the smoke. Of course there was no radio contact. It looked like everyone on those two tracks was lost. But, I don't know that for sure.*

*As we were closest, we moved to the area, about 200M from where I was and we started to sweep, on foot, thought the open grass, toward the burning tracks and trucks.*

*The most phenomenal thing about that was the one track that made it. They were*

about 150M off the road on the South side and I think they all lived. Most, I think, were wounded. Had I known better then, that track driver should have been decorated. He did the very best thing he could, and what all the manuals said to do, and that was he got his track, and therefore the squad, out of the ambush area. He took off when they were trapped and ran the track at top speed right out into the open grassy, wet, land that we really couldn't operate the tracks in without getting stuck. He hit it at top speed and I'm sure the track never had the chance to get stuck.

Didn't know him but I can picture a relatively short guy, blond headed, with an AK round sticking out of his forehead right above his left eye. He stood there and talked to me and others as we were cleaning up the area, assessing the losses, and awaiting the dust offs. At least I think that was the driver. Might not have been.

We put the, I remember 13, KIA on ramp of my track and brought them out. We had to unload them once as I had promised Al Scofield something and I hadn't seen his body and nobody else recognized him. Unfortunately he was there. Wrapped him in my poncho liner and brought them out.

We've obviously got others on this site that were there and saw it from a different perspective. I'd appreciate their input as to whether I have anything about it right.

I do know this, that it was and has remained for me one of the saddest, most frustrating days of my entire tour.

Carl G. Berning

Jan 11, 04

Cliff N,

Thanks for the reply. I don't remember much about Capt (Blades? name garbled) either, except that I can picture him and I remember him telling me about his father being at West Point. His father would have been retiring about the time he & I had that conversation at Rawlins. I would guess that he grew up right around the "West Point area" if his father was there all those years. I think he was an ROTC officer.

I picture a relatively tall man with a longish face, a lot quieter spoken than had been Capt. Phillips, even somewhat retiring in nature. I think I was or was close to his senior platoon leader at the time. Like I said before, we were never in contact together that I can recall. I had no idea that there were attempts on his life as alluded to in other messages.

I was sort of looking forward to the XO job in Base Camp but, I think, a Lt. Johnson had just gotten that job. Johnson had had heavy contact with his platoon on the night I arrived at the 4/23 area. While in the rear, someone came and got us and we went to the TOC and listened to the radio as Johnson & his platoon were trying to get out of trouble before night fell. The next day I was taken to Rawlins & met you and Henry Phillips for the first time and was assigned to Charlie, 2nd Platoon.

Back to Lt Johnson, I remember a relatively tall, 5'10" or 11' tall, black fellow. He was slim and I can picture his front teeth maybe being over-lapping. Does he sound familiar? I never was around him very much as he became the XO & I was never in Base Camp except for POL and a stand down or two.

Don't worry guys, I'll run out of things to say, soon. Would appreciate feedback to jog my memory and/or correct me in my memory is defective.

Anyone remember Sgt. Schroeder, Sgt Talley, Sgt Eddie Ryan. All what I thought we called "Instant NCOs." Lost Ryan on 9-13-68 on Hwy 26. Talley made a comment

about him on the wall page. He's at Panel 44W-Line 54. Prayed with him on July 4th of this year and traced his name. There was a picture of him on his wall page. Don't know if it's still there. Certainly was a personable, cheerful, young guy. Have thought more about his loss than any other I know, even my own cousin.

Best to you,  
Carl

\* \* \* \* \*

On 17 September at 1202 hrs, elements of **4<sup>th</sup> Bn (M) 23<sup>rd</sup> Inf** (unspecified) swept along Route 26 in the Cau Khoi 7 km east of Tay Ninh City at XT 338458 and contacted an estimated enemy battalion. Support came from helo gunships, artillery and TAC AIR, and by 1400 hrs the enemy withdrew, leaving behind 18 enemy dead (BC). The **23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Tomahawks** sustained 2 KIA and 8 WIA. **Lt. Albert W. Sirmens Jr., HHC, was KIA, noted "7 Mi E Tay Ninh City."** [Different reports differ on information given - ed.]

LTC Neilson's notes for 17 September: : A Co. & R - open Rt 22. B Co. (-) & C Co. (-),  
B & C Co's, 3/22 opened Rt 26.  
1 plat C stand down.  
B plat escort.  
B Co. rec'd mortar fire vic blown culvert CP 25.. B-3/22 on north side ran into enemy in bunkers. Called in arty, gun ships, air strikes, CS. Broke contact. Pulled out 1630.  
3 KIA, 10 wounded - 3/22, 12 WIA - B Co.  
Cu Chi-Tay Ninh convoy ran okay  
No DT convoy

On 18 September, FSB Santa Barbara had three enemy bombardments, resulting in **4<sup>th</sup> Bn (M) 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry** moving to Bao Co to conduct sweeps, and driving off further enemy attempts on the FSB.

On 20 September, FSB Rawlins came under a daylight attack at 1045 hrs by 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 274<sup>th</sup> VC/NVA Regiment. Supported by helo gunships, artillery, and TAC AIR, **Co C, 4<sup>th</sup> Bn (Mech), 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry** and B Co, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 22<sup>nd</sup> Infantry responded and drove off the attack. 28 enemy were KIA (BC), two POW, and numerous weapons including rifles, pistols, RPG launchers and rockets, submachine guns, and hand grenades. With this battle, the larger enemy formations of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> VC/NVA Divisions withdrew from the area and heavy contact was lost.

**Michael R. Manno, of A Co was KIA this day.**

**22 September.** Commander's Diary for LTC Neilson:: "22 Sep - Quiet nite - B Co. & R open Rt 22. Convoy up and down with no problem. A Co.(-) and C Co. open road to French Fort. C Co. hit at base of mountain 1200. Arty, AS, gunships, CS, re-entered contact area 1600. Found 2 BC, 1 AK47, trench line, spider holes, bunkers. Leaving area at 1630 hit by RPG, 122 mm mortar. Capt Phillips KIA. 9 WIA. Lt Hockett died of wounds. [Referring to **Capt Henry R. Phillips and Lt. James R.**

**Hockett of C Co.** [Reports differ. The latter possibly DOW incurred from earlier date of casualty – ed.]

\* \* \* \* \*

Dec 22, 03

Just a few thoughts: Was stationed at Benning before I went over with a Lt. Boyle. He had deployed with the 25th and was in the Boi Loi Woods, Operation Cedar(?) Junction. Just have a few memories of things he said as it was before I went to VN and didn't know I was going to the 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division.

Lost my first man on Sept. 13th, 1968. Eddie Ryan, age 19. Went to the wall and traced his name this last July 4th. Nice young guy, although I didn't know him very long. He was an "Instant NCO". Picture on the website of the wall.

Friend Al Schofield (sp?) was lost within that time frame also right along the same strip on Highway 26. Think he's listed as Alfonso, on the wall. We lost 13 that day and would like to see an after action report of that mess.

My last contact was on the mountain and that would be about the first or second week of July 1969, I think, They were in the perimeter before they made a sound and then blew up the big generator. We lost some Air Force guys that night and they weren't used to that. Never saw so many Air Force senior officers in my life. Afterwards, I thought they had all come out to see the site of the battle and collect a medal.

Ran across the plaque I got for being stationed on Nui Ba Den. (Been straightening up around here for Christmas.) Did the folks that were up there on temporary assignment get a plaque, or just the ones that were assigned there? Never knew, and now can't remember who gave the plaque to me, when or why. Wonder if they're rare.

The guy I talked to in Texas at Thanksgiving said his platoon lead the march for the brigade to move to Tay Ninh from Cu Chi. Was the other brigade already in Dau TIENG when they moved to Tay Ninh?

Am going to VN this year or next as I have a niece living near Saigon and she'll be there somewhere between one and five years. They left to move there in Sept of this year.

Don't mean to be a pest but would like to see some after action reports and such.  
Thanks Much,  
Carl

Oct 28, 09

Fellows: -- There were banana groves all around the base of NBD. Still are. Around 13 Aug 68 Bravo followed a trail through one of them right up to the base of the mountain. This was on the east side where a road came within a hundred or so yards of the base. We found a small fire and pot of boiling water where the trail met the mountain. A claymore in a tree killed one guy and after we got him out we pulled back and let the artillery have at the mountain. We might have brought in some Tac air too - not sure. Anyway that

*banana grove is still there, only now there is an engine house there that powers the gondola lift that goes from that spot up to a temple complex about halfway up the mountain. The complex was there during the war, although not as extensive as it is now. You can ID it on the old topographical maps. There are even more banana groves around and up several sides of NBD today.*

*Sometime in late summer '68 I was acting CO and we were operating due east of NBD. The CRIP platoon was under 1st brigade command. 4/23 didn't have their own CRIP. They attached the CRIP to us for a day and I think I sent them to do some recon between our location and NBD. The CRIP was under a young LT who was full of himself. Time magazine had done an article about this particular CRIP unit a few weeks earlier and the LT had been featured. He didn't let anyone forget. LOL*

*We had two flame tracks with us on 27-28 May '68 when we were in a long battle just west of Saigon. We had been fighting all night and towards daylight it tapered off. We thought it was over. Wrong! Just after dawn an NVA squad popped up behind a paddy dike only a couple dozen yards from our perimeter. They started firing RPGs, AKs & RPDs. Someone (Cliff?) ordered the flame tracks to take out that squad. As the flame tracks moved to that side of the perimeter, everyone moved away. No one wanted to be near one of them if it got hit. I recall the drivers threw the transmissions into neutral and raced the engines to activate the compression in the tanks. There were sparks coming out of the exhaust. Then the gunners let loose a tongue of flame and walked it along the top of the paddy dike the NVA were behind. One of them looked up at a most inconvenient time and lost his head. In a matter of seconds, the squad, maybe 7 or 8 of them, were all dead. We fought the rest of the day until the 3/4 Cav broke through to us. When we finally went out to check out the NVA squad, they were all what the guys called "Crispy Critters." Pretty gruesome.*

*Butch*

\* \* \* \* \*

**During The 1968 Battle of Tay Ninh, 25th Division accounted for 1618 enemy KIA, 43 WIA, and seven Hoi Chanh, in addition to mountains of equipment, food and ammunition.**

\* \* \* \* \*

*Jan 31, 04*

*Butch:*

*I can confirm that snake story [omitted – ed] --- I was there.*

*It happened one afternoon after we had closed Rawlins from some fun and game activities in the Province. Guys came running over to my tent to tell me come see the snake.*

*It was a cobra - I'd seen them in the zoo, in movies being "fluted" out of a basket, and in books. NEVER had I been that close to such a huge snake, much less one that was poisonous. I estimate it was at least 10 feet long and at least two hands around in circumference*

*He was clearly trapped for the moment in the plastic "ceiling" of the bunker and very agitated at not being able to figure out how to get out.*

Naturally everyone wanted the honor of shooting it. I had visions of a fusillade of M-16 rounds into the plastic and all clear misses; torn plastic; a pissed-off snake; and a bunch of GI's and me standing around wondering what to do next.

Fortunately BCSM Wise showed up, I gave him my .45 cal. pistol less he use the M-79 grenade launcher he normally carried. He put the muzzle very close to the cobra's head and shot it dead. Then put several rounds into it to make sure.

Nobody wanted to drag it out and no one wanted to stay in the bunker with a supposedly dead cobra in the ceiling. I decided that was below my and the BCSM pay grades so we left.

The guys talked about it until the next attack against Rawlins, then it went into the lore of the Tomahawks.

I think I have a picture of it alive and trapped in the plastic. If I find it, I'll try and post it.

Cliff

\* \* \* \* \*

**4<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry (M)** was awarded the Valorous Unit Award (2<sup>nd</sup> award) for actions in the "Battle of Tay Ninh, officially as part of the Counteroffensive, Phase V, 1 July 1968 - 1 November 1968.

October 31, LBJ calls a complete halt to bombing North Vietnam.

\* \* \* \* \*

**NEW CAMPAIGN Counteroffensive Phase VI 2 November 1968 - 22 February 1969**

These Tomahawk Members were KIA during the remainder of 1968:

**James A. Hollis, Alpha Co, 2 Oct 68;**  
**Kenneth B. Bixel Alpha Co, 15 Dec 68,**  
**Eugene A Christer. Co, 15 Dec 68,**  
**Brooks M. Scrivener, D Co, 17 Dec 68; [in Coffelt database, no Co]**  
**Thomas J. Hoeckelberg, D Co, 23 Dec 68;**  
**Walter C. Black Jr, A Co, 30 Dec 68, [noted "FSB Bragg II" – ed]**  
**James R. Boyle, same as above.**

\* \* \* \* \*

From 25<sup>th</sup> Inf Division After Action Report:

Intelligence: a. Enemy units during initial stage of Operation TOAN THANG II were scattered and regrouping. There was sporadic contact, but no indication that he had ability or resources to launch a major offensive. b. As the brigade AO

enlarged to the northwest, movement and positions of enemy forces became more canalized into Filhol, HO BO Woods and the Citadel. Contact with small elements continued, and harassing tactics of mortaring and hit- and run-attacks were prevalent. c. During Sep, stronger, better armed forces were encountered. The majority of contacts were made with local VC forces. There was continuous evidence of enemy resupply and construction of defensive positions. In October, FSB KEENE received a ground attack though not by a force large enough to over-run it. In Citadel area, there was a coordinated attack on A & D 2/12 Inf. October 10 and 11. In both cases the enemy did not commit himself decisively. There was evidence of NVA contact, though no main force NVA units could be pin-pointed. d. In Dec, 88th Regiment was identified as a subordinate of SR-2. The AO for the 88th was Citadel – HO BO Woods. The 7th Battalion, Cu Chi, was operating in small units and 268th Regiment was dispersed in lower Boi Loi Woods. e. On 11 December, two PWs identified their units as 268th Regiment and gave a location of XT5333316 (lower Boi Loi Woods). Interrogation indicated that no large scale attacks were planned for the immediate future. In the southern Brigade AO, documents and agent reports indicated the presence of elements of 267 and 242 Battalions. Agent reports and captured docs also indicated 272nd Regiment was located in Angel's Wing area; that it had moved south from its previous location west of Tay Ninh. Southeast of this area, along the east side of the Oriental River, captured PWs and documents identified the 242nd Battalion.

November saw the Tomahawks operating in the northwest quadrant of the division AO. The general tactical situation at the beginning was characterized by the enemy withdrawing into sanctuaries in the north along the Cambodian border, and into Cambodia to reconstitute and rearm for a continued offensive aimed at Tay Ninh City. It was expected they would limit themselves to attacks along LOCs in the Province. The Division would rely on blocking positions at FS Bases Buell, Washington and Rawlins. and conduct search and destroy operations for enemy forces.

On 17 November **Co B 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion 23<sup>rd</sup> Inf Mech** had four men wounded in an APC that struck a mine during a sweep 2 km south of Tay Ninh.

On 29 November, **B Company** engaged an enemy company by ambush. During the contact they were supported by artillery and helo gunships. The patrol suffered two WIW, but could not determine enemy casualties.

On 12 December, again **Bravo Company 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry**, found Enemy weapons, ammunition, documents and food in the Crescent area 16km northeast of Tay Ninh City.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Feb 25, 08 –*

*Fellows: I recall sometime in October '68, when I was officially XO of Co. A., I took the Co. out on a few operations as CO. I think that was toward the end of Capt.*



Montgomery's reign, just before Capt. Beach took over. On one of these operations we were on the road due east of Nui Ba Den (the one that runs into Lake Dau Tieng today) and Bn. called me and told me that they were attaching a CRIP platoon to me for the day. I don't recall if this was Bde. based, Div., based or part of one of the other mech units. But I do recall that there had been an article in Time Magazine about this platoon about 2-3 weeks earlier. They had named the Lt. who was the platoon leader in the article. Well, when this guy and his CRIP caught up to us, he was something else. To put it politely, he was full of himself. John Wayne, James Arness & Audie Murphy all rolled into one LT. I listened to some of his war stories and then sent him off to run a few roads in the area. Sent him back wherever he had come from after 3-4 hours.

Regarding the 40MM's, when I was on an advisory team down in the delta, we operated with ARVN and RF/PF. When I was with 4/23, we never operated outside of our artillery "fan" (range). So, we always had 105s, sometimes 155s to support us. With the Vietnamese, however it was different. Our units had no arty support. But we did have a US 9th Div. duster unit in Ben Luc. Someone there must have been a math major, for he devised firing tables for the 40mm to use as artillery. In other words, he figured what the elevation should be to impact at various distances from the guns. On several night ambushes I had to call on the dusters for support. They were pretty accurate, although I always tried to move our friendlies off the axis of the trajectory, just in case there was a short round. Later, the 9th ID put an 8" unit in Ben Luc and we used them. Those 8" shells passing overhead could get the pucker factor up. LOL

Regards, Butch

Jan 9, 08 During May-Nov 68 when I was Mohawk 6, my usual (99%) C&C was a LOH (brand & number I forget) which carried a pilot and 3 passengers. The usual three passengers were me, the ARTY LNO, and the BN COMDSGTMAJ. I do remember picking up one badly wounded Tomahawk one time and taking him to the EVAC Hospital at Tay Ninh. We crammed him into one of the seats. Don't remember who got out to make room but probably SGTMAJ. Before me, the C&C were earlier models that held 4 people.

As discussed many times on this board, in May 68 while operating in the swamps & rice paddies east of Saigon, a Recon trooper who will not be identified today, fell out of the airboat and was floundering around in water over his head. The pilot skillfully brought the C&C down dangerously close to the water, I half way climbed out on the strut, and grabbed the unnamed trooper by his collar. The pilot flew us over to a rice paddy dike and I dropped him.

Cliff Neilson

Mohawk 6 May-Nov 1968

Oct 26, 04

The men of Recon will remember this day. We had a simple morning mission to RIF from the Rock Crusher to the east along the base of Nui Ba Den. We stopped at the end of the road at a small abandon village. It was my fault. I thought we had gone to fast and would return too early. Higher ups may want to give us another assignment. I sent Sgt Kirby up the trail across the foot bridge toward the little

temple. He and another troop were shot and from then on it was wild. "Doc" Day went to help Kirby and he was wounded. I felt we must have been the only unit in contact that day because we had every artillery unit, gunship and fighter bomber over head wanting a chance to shoot. The C and C ships were stacked up to 10,000 feet. Every commander in the Corp seemed to show up. What should have been a simple little walk in the bananas turned into an all day fight. I give credit to the soldiers of Recon. We fought like mad and all got out alive. We did take eight casualties, but all survived. I remember the last two wounded were Keith Star and Ed Schwab.

There was a lot more to this story, but that's for another day. October 25, 1968. It was a test by fire for this Lieutenant.

Gary Bennett

\* \* \* \* \*

### **SUMMARY OF ENEMY "THIRD OFFENSIVE" BY GENERAL DONN STARRY**

From Mounted Combat in Vietnam, Center for Military History.

After the second enemy offensive [post-68 Tet battle around Saigon], just as after the first [68 Tet], both sides stepped back to assess the result and repair the damages to men and equipment. For the free world forces this interim was unlike the previous one because an air of confidence and optimism prevailed. The recuperative means of the free world forces were greater than those of the enemy.

No longer content to sit and wait for the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese to attack the populated areas, units went into the bush with a vengeance.

Base areas were penetrated repeatedly. Thus the third and last enemy offensive during 1968 fell not on the population or on critical areas but directly on the free world combat units, who were well prepared. Recognizing the change in the free world military position, the enemy chose objectives that differed in two ways from those of earlier offenses. First, the offensive had limited goals.

Second, the attacks were directed against U.S. troops, base camps, and equipment rather than at Vietnamese population centers. Intelligence after the attack revealed that a prime objective was to inflict heavy losses on U.S. troops in hope of winning a political and psychological victory.

The most sustained fighting of this third offensive took place in the III CTZ in Tay Ninh Province. By August, 16,000 soldiers of the 5th and 9th Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Divisions had infiltrated into War Zone C, prepared to attack. The 1st Bde, 25th Inf Div, the largest free world force in the area, included the 1st Bn, 5th Inf (Mech) ; **4th Bn, 23d Inf (Mech)**; 3d Bn, 22d Inf; 2d Bn, 34th Armor (-) ; and the 2d Bn, 27th Inf.

Relying on the mobility of its armored units, the brigade was organized into combined arms task forces with attached tank, infantry, and mechanized infantry units heavily supported by artillery. From the fire bases around Tay Ninh City task forces sent out wide-ranging patrols to prevent or break up enemy movement.

\* \* \* \* \*

As the reporting period for November opened, The 25<sup>th</sup> Inf Division operated with the 1<sup>st</sup> Bde in and around Tay Ninh City an overall AO that included the NW quadrant of the Divisional TAOI; 2<sup>nd</sup> Bde was deployed in the southern half of the Division TAOI generally east of the E-W 30 gridline ; with 3<sup>rd</sup> Bde in and around Dau Tieng in the overall NE quadrant of the division TAOI. The tactical situation was generally one of the VC/NVA main force units attempting to withdraw into sanctuaries in N War Zone C and Cambodia with the intention of recovering from being “badly mauled” and [they] would limit themselves to Bn and smaller operations and harassing Allied bases and installations. The 25<sup>th</sup> would interdict LOCs and avenues of approach to Tay Ninh City and Saigon, and conduct offensive ops on remaining enemy in CITIFAL, TRAPEZOID, BOI LOI, STRAIGHT EDGE and CRESCENT.

Throughout Nov, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade consisted 3<sup>rd</sup> Bn/22<sup>nd</sup> Inf and **4<sup>th</sup> Battalion (M) 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry**, supported by 7<sup>th</sup> Bn/11<sup>th</sup> Arty and continued to follow the tactical pattern set in Aug/Sep to pre-empt an attack on Tay Ninh City, meaning they maintained blocking positions at outlying FSBs Buell, Rawlins, and Washington, and ran combat ops in all directions out of those bases in daylight, and via platoon-sized ambushes at night. The usual fire support by arty, helo and fixed-wing gunships, and Tac Air continued to be available day and night. 1<sup>st</sup> Bde also communicated closely with ARVN Airborne and Marine Battalions as well as RF/PF units in the area. The enemy made no attempts to renew the threat to Tay Ninh City.

An unidentified intelligence memo dated 12 Dec 68 states, “There are numerous indications that the Communists are prepared and positioned to kick off a new wave of intensified military action at any time between now and Christmas. Most of the indicators point to III Corps as the focal point . . . and one reliable agent has reported that the attacks in III Corps are scheduled to begin the night of 12-13 December . . .” Throughout the month the tempo of engagements increased and the three Bde bases at Cu Chi, Tay Ninh, and Dau Tieng were subjected to increased attacks by fire.

\* \* \* \* \*

*A December 2 Tropic Lightning News article notes that 2 companies of 4<sup>th</sup> Bn,(Mech), 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry participated (no dates specified) with two companies of another US battalions in operations on Highway 22 NW of Tay Ninh City vic the village of Thien Ngong., alongside a multi-Battalion RF-PF force. It was the first time in the war joint operations were conducted with joint US-SVN forces of this size, and also the first time a significant operation had been supplied via Highway 22.*

*December saw an increase in significant combat as enemy main force units in Cambodia mounted increased attacks in the 25<sup>th</sup> Inf Division’s TAOI. The brigade bases at Cu Chi, Tay Ninh, and Dau Tieng received attacks by fire. First Brigade conducted preemptive operations around Tay Ninh City, with the greatest threat from the SW where 4/9<sup>th</sup> was assigned to 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade Patrol Support Base Mole, later*

renamed FSB SEDEWICK. A regimental size attack against FSB Mitchell and PSB Mole was defeated 22 December.

\* \* \* \* \*

From Tropic Lightning News Dec, 16, 1968:

*A Hard Day Proves Worth Of Tomahawks Young CRIP*

TAY NINH - Combined Reconnaissance and Intelligence Patrol, better known as CRIP, is geared for action. The **CRIP of the 4th Battalion, (Mechanized) , 23rd Infantry**, has kept pace since it was formed two weeks ago.

CRIP was performing lead security on Highway 22, eight miles west of Tay Ninh City, when called into action. At 5:30 p.m., CRIP received word to return to Tay Ninh West to pick up ammo to deliver to Fire Support Base Hull, sixteen miles southeast of Tay Ninh City. At 8 p.m. just as the men of CRIP had finished their mission, they received word that the Crusaders of the 187th Assault Helicopter Company had lost a gunship to small arms fire four miles south of Tay Ninh City. Without hesitation CRIP moved into action. Braving the night and an estimated two battalions of VC and NVA troops, CRIP went to work.

After checking out the area completely, CRIP set up security around the fallen gunship. The night vigilance passed without incident.

\* \* \* \* \*

Dect 21, 09

Let me add my memories to the subject:

When I assumed command of 4/23rd on 13 May 1968 from the much admired LTC Avery Fullerton, there was **NO** D Co. If there had ever been before that date, I am unaware, thereby disclaiming memory responsibility for the period: AK-HI-1966 landing in RVN to 13 May 1968.

When I relinquished command on 13 Nov 1968 to LTC Al Butler (KIA May 1969) D Company existed. My records show that it was first commanded by Captain Lincoln who went to C Co after Captain Phillips was KIA. The next commander was Capt Melvin T. Starr.

My best guess is that a new TO&E for all USA Mech Battalion was put into effect 1 July 1968 but I have no record of that. I just remember from my 22 years in the Army, it habitually did things like reorganize units on the 1st of a month.

As has been noted recently, D Co was composed of: 1) Medical Platoon commanded by a LT MSC 2) Supply and Transport Platoon commanded by a LT QMC or TRAN 3) Maintenance Plat commanded by a CWO. Either separately or embedded in the Supply and Transport Plat was a Mess section containing all the mess Sergeants and cooks.

The theory was that as support was needed by one or more line companies operating in a fluid battlefield situation, D Co would attach a composite element. We did not fit that fluid model and so adapted.

In my time it did not work that way at all, because of semi-permanence of the Tay Ninh Base Camp-FSB Rawlins III arrangement. The only fluid combat was out from FSB Rawlins in the AM and back before night; then defend the perimeter.

*Part of D Co was at FSB Rawlins all the time and provided support there. The remainder of D Co was TNBC tending to things there.*

*For instance, Maintenance and Supply Plat provided each company an armorer, usually in TNBC and took care of vehicles and weapons both at FSB Rawlins and TNBC.*

*At FSB Rawlins III, each Co had medics attached and the Medic Plt ran a 'sick call in both places; we all ate in a common mess area, both at FSB Rawlins and TNBC. D Co at FSB Rawlins provided "heavy" vehicular and weapon maintenance for the wrecks we brought back each night.*

*At no time during this period was any combat platoon in D Co.*

*"So sayeth The Old Man" (41 years after the fact)*

*Cliff*

*Oct 29. 09*

*Hi guys,*

*I was in D Company from 5/69 to 4/70 at FSB Rawlins, we were primarily support, i.e. mechanics, electricians, welders etc. On occasion we went as back up for HHQ or Alpha company but not very often.*

*If you were there at that time you may remember hearing or reading in Stars and Stripes about a track mounted Mini-Gun well that was my platoon, we raised a lot of HELL with that.*

*Also D Company's numbers were Titty Pink.*

*Hope this helps.*

*Ritch*

*Sep 1, 2002*

*I'm still one of the old fashion guys who is just trying to figure out how to use a computer. No access to scanner yet but would be happy to snail mail any documents I have to you. I also have some after action reports for the firefight we got into on Dec 15th 1968 where we lost our point man. I know a couple of other guys were lost on that day also from the mortar platoon they had 2 tracks hit. The June 69 date is vague but I think that's the one where we (A Co.) got hell from the CO because we shot some farmers water buffalo or pig with the 50cal.*

*Also, I have the military overlay maps of operation ranch hand spraying for those of us that are still concerned about agent orange.*

*I think I did the profile thing on yahoo but can't remember. Any clues or hints you can give me on how to do this electronic stuff would be great.*

*Later, Ken Belanger, A Co. Track #14 '68-'69*

*Jan 30, 03*

*I have debated for a long time whether or not to share this with all of you. After reading all of the messages the last few days on sharing, talking, and healing. I found that for me, it was to write own my experiences and let others read it and see how they responded.*

*When I went back to school I found myself in English class again and my first*

*paper was to be on something that I had experienced that changed my life, Vietnam. So from a assignment in English, and after many hours of writing and rewriting the paper evolved into a brief overview of my time in Nam. Someday I want to write it all down. Well here it is.*

*Mouse*

### *THIRTY AND A WAKE UP - by Richard Shaffner*

*Almost thirty five years ago I stood in the orderly room door of Company A HQs while on CQ in Tay Ninh, South Vietnam. Looking up at the stars on that evening of October 26, 1968, I said to myself, "This is a hell of a place to celebrate my twenty-first birthday." Like most people, I had often thought I would celebrate my twenty-first birthday by having a party or doing something exciting, definitely not thousands of miles from home nor in the middle of a war, declared or not. Out of all of the men in A Company, it was hard to believe that at twenty-one I was considered one of the old men of the company.*

*When I came back from Vietnam, no one wanted to hear about it; now they do. I am now fifty-five years old and have had thirty + years to reflect on, and try to understand all the things I went through in Vietnam. I can see now why I was able to endure all the death and chaos around me and not be torn apart by the loss of some of those I served with.*

*September 7, 1968: As the plane began to pull away from the terminal at Stapleton Airport [Denver – Ed.] on my way to Oakland, I looked out the window and saw Mom and Dad. I said a silent good-bye as I watched them disappear from view. Somehow, I knew I would not be coming home.*

*Three days later I got my first view of Vietnam as the plane was landing at Tan Son Nhut Airport, which was about the same size as Stapleton. There were no other planes on the runway since the airport was expecting an enemy attack at any minute. We ran from the plane to the terminal, which was small, crowded, and dirty. As we hurried to board buses to take us to Bien Hoa for "in-processing" to Vietnam, I saw a sign on the side of one of the buses, "Welcome to the Nam."*

*From there, I went to Cu Chi where I was given magazines and 25th Infantry Division booklets, some of which I discarded the first chance I got. I was assigned to **Alpha Company, 4th Battalion Mechanized 23rd Infantry**, operating out of Tay Ninh. Once in Tay Ninh I spent the first couple of days getting familiar with my commo equipment, tracks and the guys in the company. From the end of October to the first part of November we were at Fire Support Base Rawlins than on November 12, 1968 the company was moved to Fire Support Base Bragg.*

*We stayed for over sixty days, far longer than the twenty- five days we were supposed to be there. This turned out to be the most life-threatening period of my tour in Vietnam.*

*December 12: Another hot and cloudless day. While I was repairing a telephone line next to the TOC bunker around ten in the morning, word came over the radio that the first and second platoons had made contact with two companies of North Vietnamese Army Regulars while the company was on road security for Highway 22. About noon, I found out from the First Sergeant that the Track Commander of 43*

*Track had been hit by a rocket propelled grenade, which cut him almost in half while he was standing inside of the track firing the 50 caliber machinegun. Two hours later he died on the operating table in Tay Ninh. I had just met him the night before, a tall 6 foot two blonde-haired, blue-eyed California surfer. Now a short sixteen hours later he was dead. I found out later, he only had five days left in country. I don't remember his name, but I can see him in my mind's eye, as he was that evening in the fourth platoon's bunker, laughing and cutting up. For the first time, the cold reality of war hit me. This was real and not just a bad dream. I not only realized how quickly one's life could end - I could die just as quickly. I kept telling myself, Only 288 and a wake up.*

*December 14: about five in the afternoon, I was in the chow line. Suddenly, one of the replacements, a very young eighteen year-old who had only been with the company two days, while reading a letter from home, let out a yell, " I'm a father, I'm a father!" He started running up and down the line telling everybody that his wife had a six-pound baby boy. I will never forget the look of jubilation on his face or those sparkling brown eyes so full of joy. After I finished eating, I went over to the maintenance area to remove the communications equipment from 43 Track. It was to be do's (Direct exchanged) the next day. After I had removed and stacked it on the floor of the track, I headed towards the second platoon area to check out the radio in 22 Track. I went twenty yards, stopped, and headed back. I had forgotten to close the rear door on 43 Track. Shutting the door and starting back towards second platoon, I reached about the same distance when three 61mm mortar rounds exploded twenty yards in front of me. The first one hit on top of the eight-foot berm to my left and killed the new father while he was taking a shower. Shrapnel cut off the top of his head. The second round hit in the road between the outer berm and the inner one. The third landed in artillery where the gun crews were playing basketball, killing two and wounding six. After I hit the ground, lay there wishing I were back in the real world.*

*There was a lull after those first three rounds, and I got up and ran like hell back towards the maintenance area. When I got to within a few feet of 43 Track, more mortar rounds exploded somewhere behind me. I hit the ground and crawled underneath the track. When I got the chance, I got out from underneath the track and ran into the mechanic's bunker. In less than six minutes, we took over twenty mortar rounds. I did not realize how close to death I had come until the next morning when I went over to the maintenance area and retraced my steps from the afternoon before. When I was forty yards from 43 Track, I stopped to look at where the round had landed in the road. A cold chill ran up and down my spine when I realized that had I not gone back to shut that door, I would have been at the point of impact and killed . I did not sleep very well that night. I finally fell asleep thinking only, "285 and a wake up.*

*Looking back now, I can see why so many, mostly eighteen year olds just out of high school, turned to drugs in Vietnam to escape the reality of where they were, fear, never knowing if or when they would be killed, and not knowing why they were there in the first place. Although I did not have the emotional turmoil that many did, I still had to deal with being homesick and missing those I cared about most.*

*Still January 14, 6: 00 p.m.: The evening calm was shattered by the thump,*

*thump of mortar rounds leaving the tubes and someone shouting, incoming, incoming! Everyone ran for cover to the nearest bunker: so much for a quiet night. The ground shook from ear-shattering explosions as round after round hit. I had a clear view of a deuce and a half disappearing in a cloud of smoke and flame, red-hot pieces of metal flying through the air in every direction as I dived into a bunker. I sat in the bunker with six others and waiting for the attack to end. Their faces showed fear, cold sweat glistening in the twilight that came in from the narrow entrance.*

*All through the attack a scene from one of my favorite movies, "Guadalcanal Diary", where groups of Marines were crammed a bunker being shelled by a Japanese Battleship, kept running over and over in my mind. One of the Marines was trying to put into words what he was feeling. When I watched the movie, safe at home, it was "just a movie." I never thought I would be in a similar situation, or have those same feelings.*

*Twenty-five minutes and 155 rounds later, it was over as quickly as it had started. The sudden silence was deafening. Since this was not the normal hit and run attack, a full-scale ground assault was expected any minute, as movement was detected all around the perimeter. Quiet settled over the perimeter as all eyes tried to penetrate the pitch-blackness. Everybody was thankful that no fires lit up the inside of the perimeter, except an occasional flare to light up the wood line a two hundred yards away. In the distance, I could hear Huey Cobras along with Snoopy, coming our way.*

*Smoke and dust permeated the air; someone on the far side perimeter was screaming for a medic. Cooks and mechanics were being assembled to act as a reserve force. On everyone's mind was how many men had been wounded or killed. Each in his own way was thankful that he had made it through alive and in one piece one more time, even though some of the dead or wounded might have been friends.*

*This was the first time I had been able to reflect on what was happening. I also had to face the possibility of hand-to-hand combat and the fact that I would find out if I could kill another human being. Midnight: We received word to stand down as all enemy movement had ceased. Time to get some rest; for most of the company tomorrow would be a long and hot day. Likewise, Snoopy, two AC-119's gunships, and the two Huey Cobras were heading back to their bases. The smell of cordite was still heavy, although all the dust and smoke had long since dissipated. I was woke up at four for my shift on the watch tower. As I passed the command bunker on my way to the 90-foot watchtower. The medics inside were working on the wounded; one of them was moaning. Just outside the entrance, illuminated by a sliver of light through a slit in the canvas door, was what looked like a mangled arm wrapped in bloody bandages. None of the wounded could be airlifted out until sunrise when the Medevac helicopters could come in.*

*January 5, dawn: The air was damp and cool, almost cold. As I looked out over the perimeter, a thin bluish-white mist covered the landscape as far as the eye could see. The acrid taste of fear slowly left my mouth. After a night of chaos, the tranquility was refreshing. The odor of cordite had finally begun to dissipate. To the north, groups of low hills rose above the mist, looking closer than they really were. Early dawn slowly gave way to a reddish glow of the sun as it rose in the east. The*



old runway, pitted with puddles of water, made its appearance just outside the southeast side of the perimeter. To the west, Nui Ba Den (the black virgin) is bathed a reddish cast of the sun, while its summit is shrouded in clouds.

Only twenty minutes more and the sun would be up, and with it a new day. The company was getting ready to move out. Demolition teams were looking for live 105mm rounds scattered all over the area. The cleanup had started and would take most of the day. Next to the TOC bunker, four members of Third Platoon killed when their bunker took a direct hit, were neatly lined up in body bags waiting for transport back to the real world. All four had been with the company only one day. Artillery crews were getting three damaged Pack 105mm howitzers ready to be airlifted back to Tay Ninh. The roar of eighteen diesel engines shattered the stillness, as the company started to move out on another mission.

The sun was up now, a new day had started, and I said a silent prayer of thanks for being alive to see another sunrise. I didn't know if I would see the sunset. On my way to my bunker, I passed the medics who were gathered outside the command bunker. Their faces were pale and drawn with eyes glassy and red from lack of sleep. They had finally finished working on the last wounded. I reminded myself, "Only 276 and a wake up.

January 8: A Recon track was blown up by a 500-pound remote detonated bomb while it was on its way back to Tay Ninh. The squad, the Driver, and Track Commander (thirteen in all) were killed instantly by the explosion and ensuing fire. It took twelve hours for the wreckage to cool down enough to recover what was left of the bodies of the driver and Track Commander. Some of the squad had been in country only a few weeks. I was glad that I had not gotten to know any of them. – RS

Some very early correspondence on the message board (2002) as members were finding it, joining, trying to catch up:

\* \* \* \* \*

August 14, 2002

I was assigned to the mysterious "D" company from 8/68-69. Worked in the motor pool resupply. When I got there, there wasn't a road wheel, torsion bar, or track pad to be had anywhere in Tay Ninh, except for what was in the field. Seems as though 5th echelon maintenance and higher had their own private stock. My boss SFC Carter (can't remember first name) and I drove a 4 deuce over to get track parts on several occasions (light retriever down) so mechanics could make repairs during stand down. Many of those mechanics were assigned to HHQ. We also made frequent trips to FSB Buehl and the rock crusher. Regards,  
SP/5 Jerry Geil (Whitey)

Aug 14

I was with Flame platoon January 1968 to October 1968. I seem to recall that the numbers on our tracks were white. We had tracks 50, 51, 52, 53, and 54.

*By the way, does anyone recall Sgt Hicks. He was platoon Sgt and Acting Platoon leader after Lt Hamil was KIA. Tom Cadman*

*Aug 14*

*Recon had 10 tracks with 5 men per track when at full strength. Which as you are aware of I'm sure wasn't often. Our numbers were yellow. After 30 plus years it's fun to hear old farts shoot the bull.*

*James*

*Aug 14*

*James,*

*I was back at Tay Nin the night Dwight was hit. He had only about 12 days left. He was a good friend and a good guy. He had talked about reenlisting. I think of him often. He was only 20. Funny, we seemed so much older then, but we were all 19, 20 or 21. Your mentioning his name just brought back a deep sadness, but at the same time reminds me what a privilege it is to have known these guys.*

*Tom*

\* \* \* \* \*

*The last actions for Tropic Lightning soldiers during their 27th year occurred 20 Dec, 68. The day opened with a mortar and ground attack against the 1<sup>st</sup>/5th (M) NDP on the edge of Ben Cui Rubber Plantation, beginning at five minutes past midnight, lasting 3 hours, that cost the attackers 37 dead. Twenty-eight more enemy died the same day in a two-hour battle with **4/23d (M) Inf** and 3/22d Inf eight miles SE of Tay Ninh City. 4/9<sup>th</sup> Inf killed 106 enemy.*

*Ten days of moderate activity brought Tropic Lightning's 27th year to a close. More than 3,700 enemy soldiers had challenged the Lightning and died during Toan Thang II.*

*Intel Summary of 12 Dec 68 states, "There are numerous indications that the communists are prepared and positioned to kick off a new wave of intensified military action any time between now and Christmas. Most of the indicators point to III Corps as the focal point for the upcoming attacks, particularly those involving infantry assaults . . . Some sharp upsurge in communist offensive activity is almost certain to develop in the next two weeks . . .*

**Summary of 1968 Ops From Mounted Combat in Vietnam. Center for Military History, 1989:**

*"For South Vietnamese and free world armored forces the battles of 1968 marked the acceptance of armor as an asset to the fighting forces in Vietnam. That acceptance was won on the battlefield by a demonstration of mobility and firepower that silenced all critics. When the enemy forced free world forces to move rapidly from one battle area to another, it was the armored forces that covered the ground quickly and in many cases averted disaster. Rapid movement was imperative in the early stages of*

*the enemy attack, and the armored units were the first ground forces to reach the battlefield in almost every major engagement, although the winning of the battles eventually involved all forces. . . . these battles point[s] to the value of armored units as reaction forces.” – Gen Donn Starry*

\* \* \* \* \*

*Philip Davidson (Vietnam At War) points out (pp 529-540) states that the Tet offensive and its aftermath starkly revealed the strategic vacuum in which US policy had been operating since 1966. The problem was not that we had been following the wrong strategic goals, but that we had no strategic goals at all. The war had been pursued on the tactical offensive, but the strategic defensive. A major re-analysis was undertaken to define clearly some larger objective. Three alternatives were seen: more of the same, withdrawal to the population centers, and the one selected, what ultimately came to be called Vietnamization. Likewise the North Vietnamese had to pause and reassess its strategy due to the overwhelming losses suffered, and they subsequently gave up expecting to bring about a nationwide General Uprising/ General Offensive, but rather, kept the pressure on selected areas while stalling in the Paris Peace Talks, believing (apparently correctly) that time was on their side.*

\* \* \* \* \*

*In Lt. Col Duquesne Wolff's personal "Appreciation" of the Battle of Tay Ninh, he summarized the results: During the period 5-27 August, 1968 the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade successfully accomplished all missions assigned . . . The results were victory in battle in 14 engagements with a numerically superior enemy who was aggressively attacking to destroy US forces and bases in the 1<sup>st</sup> Bde TAOR. The successful defensive and offensive operations of 1<sup>st</sup> Bde contributed significantly to the defeat of the "Third Offensive . . . The enemy suffered over 1200 KIA (body count) and US losses were approximately 85 KIA. However, subsequent intelligence has revealed that the enemy suffered 1500 KIA and over 2000 WIA during this period of heavy contact.*

\* \* \* \* \*

*A Declassified CIA, Office of Intelligence Estimates Memo of 16 Sep, 1968 opined:*

- 1. The long awaited and much heralded third communist Offensive has fallen well short of its advanced billing . . . No doubt much of this is due to increasingly effective Allied spoiling operations . . .*
- 2. The gap between the ominous predictions and the subsequent reality has led to considerable speculation. One view is the Communists suffered a near disastrous defeat and have been forced to postpone if not cancel their plans . . . A contrary opinion is that the climax is yet to come . . . ultimately against Saigon.*

3. *In manpower and material the Communist forces are still capable of a considerable effort . . . [And later on pp 4-5, " . . . ] the military aspects of the struggle will gradually be overshadowed by the political aspects . . . "*

*On the other hand, in a memo dated 12 December 1968 released from LBJ Library in 1992, believed to be part of a CIA transmittal SC 12380/68, " . . .we find: There are numerous indications that the Communists are prepared and positioned to kick off a new wave of intensified military action any time between now and Christmas. Most of the indicators point to III Corps as the focal point, particularly those involving infantry assaults."*

*They were not, however, forthcoming as expected in calendar 1968, but WERE coming in the New Year.*

## **1969 FIGHT FOR THE BORDERS / ABRAMS'S & NIXON'S WAR**

On 1 January, 1969 there were 536,000 US troops in Vietnam, the peak of US strength and effectiveness. These included nine divisions (seven Army and two Marine, four independent Army brigades, and various other combat and support units, all under Gen. Creighton W. Abrams who held three titles: Commander, U.S. Military Assistance Command Vietnam (COMUSMACV), Commanding General US Army Vietnam, and Senior Advisor to the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF.),

1969 began, for the US, with Richard Nixon being sworn into office with his 'secret' plan for withdrawing the US from Vietnam. The plan was: 1) to continue the One War strategy, 2) Vietnamization, and 3) troop withdrawals. For North Vietnam, its planners began the year by throwing the remainder of their greatly reduced strength in the III CTZ area of the south at US bases and troops. This included a series of sapper attacks on Cu Chi base, Dau Tieng base, miscellaneous FSBs, and attempts to penetrate Tay Ninh City, all in an effort to duplicate the shock caused by the 1968 Tet Offensive by creating extra casualties to feed the US domestic antiwar movement, and increase international opposition to continued US support of the RVN. There was also an additional incentive if they were able to occupy one or more towns and establish a "shadow government." While symbolic, it would show strength to not only the Paris negotiators, but lend some absent prestige to the VC in a prospective coalition government. This didn't work, as we shall see, since it infuriated President Nixon, and led to not only intensified pressure on communist forces in the border areas within SVN, but also to sharply increased secret bombing of "refuge" base areas inside Cambodia / Laos by B52s under the set of operations under an umbrella name, Operation Menu. Individual sub-targets and objectives were identified by a meal, i.e. Breakfast, Lunch, Snack.

It also began the first full year with MACV commanded by General Abrams and with the new policies as mentioned above. He termed his strategy "One War", and it was aimed at greater flexibility, and abandonment of Search and Destroy and attrition. [Officially.] As he informed Pres Johnson earlier, "We've got to go beyond smashing up the enemy's main force units. We have to do that selectively, but the way to get off the treadmill is to get after his infrastructure and guerrillas." The One War strategy was designed to blend traditional military efforts with increasing attempts at Pacification . . . with a focus on smaller operations than heretofore . . . and dropping the division of labor between the US pursuing combat and SVN pursuing pacification." [From Andrew Wiest] Notwithstanding semantic differences, however, Gen Philip Davidson in his book, Vietnam At War 1946-1975 asserts, "Abrams made no abrupt and voluntary change of operational strategy. As Bob Komer said later, 'I was there when General Abrams took over . . . there was no change in strategy whatever . . . The myth of change is a figment of the media imagination . . .' Davidson concurs: "I was J-2, MACV when General Abrams took over and can confirm what Komer said."

[Note: Davidson was Westmoreland's, then Abrams's G-2 for a while.]

The Q1 1969 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division Summary reports, "In Jan 69, the enemy generally avoided contact throughout the TAOI" [though for men who had any contact, it was usually plenty – ed.] and then goes on to detail a series of sharp engagements, not perhaps involving the numbers as in 1968 (if you sat in MACV), but large enough for those troops more directly concerned.

Intelligence estimates indicated that the Viet Cong was holding to his long term goal of re-unifying South and North Vietnam under the Hanoi government now that negotiations were taking place in Paris and they believed a coalition or compromise government might emerge from them. Enemy strength was estimated at 222,000, broken down as: 125,000 maneuver troops in VC and NVA units, (89 battalions in III CTZ) , 47,000 service troops, and 50,000 guerillas. There were three enemy divisions in IICTZ: 1<sup>st</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup>.

Early 1969 Tomahawk members KIA include:

**19 January Ronald Harris of Alpha Co**  
**24 January Michael A. Laderle of Bravo Co**

Quoted from 25<sup>th</sup> Division AAR & Lessons Learned:

During the 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter, ending 30 April, 1st Brigade operated with 3 battalions (4/9th Inf; 3/22 Inf; and **4<sup>th</sup> Bn 23d Infantry (M)**).

The US had built up strength in late 1968 to protect Saigon: they moved 1<sup>st</sup> Air Cavalry from I CTZ to III CTZ near Cambodia (Snoul), 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne and 199<sup>th</sup> light Infantry Brigade to just west of Saigon in Gia Dinh, one Brigade 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Div to just southwest of Saigon (Ben Luc), 11<sup>th</sup> Armored Cavalry to Bien Hoa / Long Binh, 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division – all Brigades -- in Tay Ninh Province, and 1<sup>st</sup> Inf Division to block routes southwest out of War Zone D. Friendly forces totaled 108 maneuver Battalions in III CTZ.

On 5 January, 1730 hours, an APC from **B Co, 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion (M), 23<sup>rd</sup> Inf** detonated an antitank mine as the unit conducted search operations in an area 9 kilometers southeast of Tay Ninh (XT303375). The vehicle was destroyed and one man riding in the track was wounded.

On 20 January, **Alpha Company, 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion (M) 23d Inf** located an enemy cache of rice RPG-2 ammo at XT334619, five kilometers east of the mountain.

On 23 January, **A Co, 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 23<sup>rd</sup> Inf (M)** blew up an ammunition cache and secured documents 14 kilometers northeast of Tay Ninh at XT337554.

Next day, 24 January **B Co, 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion 23<sup>rd</sup> Inf (Mech)** at XT114694 [?-ed] received an unknown amount of enemy small arms fire resulting in one US KIA -- **Michael A. Laderle of B Co.**

## **NEW CAMPAIGN: COUNTEROFFENSIVE PHASE VII 23 FEBRUARY 1969 -- 8 JUNE 1969**

On 28 February, 2/27<sup>th</sup> Infantry was placed OPCON to 1st Brigade, as intel indicated TAY NINH CITY as a probable target for a Winter-Spring offensive. These units, working with ARVN airborne battalions, (1st/ 2nd/ 3rd/ 5th/ 6th/ 7th/ 8th/ 9th at various times,) and the 1st and 3rd GVN Marine Battalions) conducted operations to preempt enemy moves against TAY NINH CITY. Later in March, 2/27<sup>th</sup> Infantry was returned to 2nd Brigade because most contacts were being made in their area. Throughout the period, Troop C, 3/17 Air Cav flew in support of 1st Brigade. The US 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division increased surveillance and search of the TAOR. With 1968's TET offensive in mind, and heeding intelligence predictions of a major offensive, all efforts went toward gaining early contact with the enemy and denying him ammo and food supplies.

As Tet 1969 approached, the main threat to 25th Division's area was in its northern sectors. Across the Cambodian border, the enemy could assemble troops and supplies brought down the Ho Chi Minh Trail. A scant 16 miles from Tay Ninh City, the enemy could mount a considerable offensive if he could filter through Straight Edge Woods, cross the river, and position himself within striking distance of 25th Infantry Division bases. With this prospect, 25<sup>th</sup> Division redoubled its efforts to disrupt the enemy and capture his supplies. A major enemy resupply and reinforcement center lay on Nui Ba Den, a lone craggy mountain on the fringe of the triple canopy jungles of War Zone C.

In thousands of caves that honeycomb deep into granite, the enemy had an ideal center for operations. In January 1969, the division's 1st Brigade determined to sweep the mountain. With elements of 3<sup>d</sup> Battalion, 22d Inf (M ? - ed), **4<sup>th</sup> Battalion 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry (M)**, and tanks from the 2 Battalion 34<sup>th</sup> Armor, the Brigade began to search the slopes. They uncovered supplies and weapons destined for the planned 1969 "Tet Offensive," destroyed enemy emplacements in caves, and engaged fleeing squads. It is significant that during 1969 Tet, no major attacks were mounted from Nui Ba Den.

To the north of Tay Ninh City stretches 30 miles of triple canopy jungle, uninhabited, difficult to recon, and nearly impassable to patrols. The enemy established training zones here for troops operating in the allied III Corps zone. The key to the Allied defense lay in continuous probes and vigilant screening along the southern borders of War Zone C. This defense harassed the enemy resupply effort and limited his movement out of the jungle to launch campaigns. In the northeast corner of the division's AO, 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, then stationed in Dau Tieng, faced the problem of finding and fighting an enemy well entrenched in the thick forests and mountains known as the Razorbacks.

With the enemy already deployed and organized on three sides, the 25th Division and ARVN forces waged a combined defensive campaign to prevent a major

Tet battle. Probes, followed by sweeps continually knocked the enemy off-balance and prevented him from bringing significant forces into the Province's populated center. A major effort was made to find prepositioned enemy forces in advance of his attacks. Enemy patrols were interdicted and dispersed, and heavy artillery barrages and major air assaults met all signs of enemy assembly in key areas of the province. The Diamond fire support bases and Frontier City Patrol Base blocked and destroyed the Spring Offensive's last efforts and delivered a crushing blow to the already stunned and defeated enemy.

It should also be noted that the US had been developing and relying on a variety of increasingly reliable air-dropped electronic remote sensors to help monitor trail and border activity: seismic, sound, motion.

In February 69, the enemy began a series of attacks on villages and hamlets in Hau Nghia and Tay Ninh Provinces in a last ditch effort to secure food, shelter and popular support. They lost on every count. Cu Chi District was typical. There, in a series of night battles, the enemy tried to intimidate the local population and wrest from them the food and medical supplies they so badly needed. In testimony to the increasing strength of the GVN, RF/PFs soundly whipped the enemy. They stopped the enemy on the edges of the village in a series of battles, backed up with US artillery and air support. Local civilians increasingly volunteered information on enemy caches and movements, and allied soldiers swept in to capture supplies and engage enemy forces.

## **1969 TET & SPRING OFFENSIVE**

**Operation TOAN THANG III** (19 February – 31 March 69) 25th Infantry Division participated in the end of Phase II and beginning of Phase III, Op Toan Thang, with emphasis on finding, fighting and destroying the enemy in his base areas to preempt to follow-up the "3rd Offensive." The prevailing dry season enabled the 25<sup>th</sup> Division to exert its full armor, mechanized and heli-borne mobility in search of the enemy. As the period began, enemy activity varied from light to moderate. The last week of February, however, saw the highest level of enemy activity since the 3rd offensive in August / September 68. The VC / NVA had used the lull to prepare for the general offensive of his Winter / Spring campaign.

Until the departure of the 2/27<sup>th</sup> Infantry, 2nd Brigade comprised five Maneuver Bns: 2/14<sup>th</sup> Infantry; 2/34<sup>th</sup> Armor; 2/12<sup>th</sup> Infantry; 1/5<sup>th</sup> Inf (M); and 2/27<sup>th</sup> Infantry. During March, the Brigade regained 2/27<sup>th</sup> Inf plus gained 1/505 Abn Inf, which was to continue operations in the SUGARMILL area, begun by the units of the US 1st Air Cavalry Division (Airmobile). The Brigade oriented its operations along the BA THU - DUC LAP - MY HANH and BINH THUY infiltration corridors, and PHU HOA DONG corridor along the Saigon River. Other operations were conducted in HO BO WOODS, BOI LOI, FILHOL, CITADEL, TRANG BANG and TRUNG LAP areas. The Brigade continued daily convoy security between CU CHI Base Camp and DUC HOA along Highways 8A and TL10, between HOC MON and TRANG BANG on Highway 1, and parts of Highways 6A, 7A and TL15. The Brigade was also responsible for



defending PHUY CUONG / BA BEP Bridges, and daily designated an infantry battalion as a Division Ready Reaction Force. A number of combined operations were conducted with 1st RVN Marines and 4/7th ARVN Regiment, 5th ARVN Division along the Saigon River and in the FILHOL plantation.

3rd Bde operated in the northeast 25<sup>th</sup> Division TAOR with two Battalions: 1/27th Inf and 2/22nd Inf (M). 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade conducted large sweeps in BEN CUI and MICHELIN rubber plantations and a large civil relocation from MICHELIN to TRI TAM District. The Brigade's efforts were directed toward Military Pacification via destroying enemy forces in the KHIEN HANH and TRI TAM Districts. The Brigade also ran operations in the BOI LOI Woods and TRAPEZOID areas.

Activity during February developed slowly. Soldiers from Troop C Troop/3<sup>rd</sup> Squadron 4th Cavalry [organic to US 25<sup>th</sup> infantry Division] engaged the enemy in a skirmish north of GO DAU HA on 1 February 1969, killing five enemy and capturing six small arms. The following day they returned to this area and reestablished contact about noon. Troop B engaged an est enemy company in entrenched bunkers. Coordinated artillery and air strikes were placed upon the position, and Troop B was reinforced by Troops A and C, and by elements of the 1st RVN Marines. This action resulted in 30 enemy KIA and 16 WIA. On 8 February, fighting was centered near Division HQs at CU CHI. Companies A and B/2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion 14<sup>th</sup> Infantry were conducting a series of assaults along the northern edge of FILHOL rubber plantation (XT632236). On their third landing, they received small arms and automatic weapons fire. This engagement lasted three hours. Sweeps through the enemy position disclosed 12 enemy dead.

Companies A and B/1/5<sup>th</sup> (M) engaged an enemy force just to the east (XT624220) and killed 25 NVA. Next day, elements of 2nd Brigade attempted to reestablish contact in this area. Instead, they located a sizable cache of arms, ammo and explosives. From this point on, the Division intensified its surveillance and search of the TAOR. With last year's TET offensive in mind, and in heed of intelligence predictions for another major offensive, all efforts were made to gain early contact with the enemy and denial of ammo and food. On 16 February, Co A/1/5<sup>th</sup> Infantry (Mech) made contact just south of HOBOWOODS with an estimated enemy company. Reinforced by A/2/14<sup>th</sup> Infantry, their combined fire power resulted in 33 enemy dead. The discovery of caches increased rapidly. 1st Brigade discovered two underground warehouse bunkers, 11 km northeast of TAY NINH on 18 February, containing 1700 rounds of mortar, recoilless rifle, and RPG ammo. A combined strike by Air Force jets and Cobra Gunships of the 17th Air Cav destroyed 2110 tons of rice, five tons of millet and two and one half tons of salt located northwest of TAY NINH.. Results were confirmed by a ground assessment by US 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 22<sup>nd</sup> Infantry.

From MACV's February 1969 Monthly Summary: In III CTZ enemy activity fell into two phases. The first phase, February 1 thru 22, the enemy generally avoided contact while positioning troops for an offensive. The second Phase beginning February 23 to the end of the month was characterized by an enemy offensive directed primarily against [US] military installations.

Info From After Action Report/Lessons Learned: INTELLIGENCE: Various reports were received that the enemy was grouping nearby with the mission of attacking Dau Tieng Base Camp and fire support bases throughout 3d Brigade AO.

8. MISSION: 2/22<sup>nd</sup> Infantry (Mech) was to have one platoon of Company B and their Scout Platoon present in Dau Tieng as base camp reaction force, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion 22<sup>nd</sup> Infantry (Mech) was also to occupy 12 bunkers along the north and east perimeter s and two on the south perimeter. Troops occupying bunkers were members of the rear detachment to include cooks, supply, clerks, and mechanics. Company A was to remain ready to react from FSB Wood II and Company B from their Night Defensive Position.

9. CONCEPT OF OPERATION; With the rear detachment of 2/22<sup>nd</sup> Infantry (M) occupying 12 bunkers covering the north and northeast perimeter, and two bunkers on the south, Companies A, B, and C would be prepared to move into blocking positions and to react to the base camp.

10. EXECUTION: At 2330 hrs, Dau Tieng came under heavy mortar & rocket fire. Within 15 minutes, the enemy shifted indirect fire inside the perimeter and made a ferocious attack on the berm line. Almost the entire perimeter was receiving very heavy RPG, recoilless rifle, machine gun, and small arms fire, but the main attack came from the southeast and south. Moving in waves, enemy breached the wire on the east end of the runway. At the outset the Scout Platoon from B Co was alerted and ordered to reinforce the perimeter at the east end of runway. Arriving minutes later, 3 APCs moved on line 100 meters north of the runway and began firing into the breach. The other two tracks in the platoon moved directly to the runway to reinforce bunkers on each side. Bunker 65 was on the north and 66 on the south. The enemy breached the wire in front of bunker 65 and were in drainage ditches along the sides of the runway, attacking bunkers from the rear. As APCs [armored personnel carriers] approached, enemy in ditches fired RPG's. As APCs arrived at bunker 65 one was struck with an RPG round and was on fire.

Bunker 66 still needed help. Disregarding a warning that it would be suicidal to take another track across to bunker 66, men volunteered and moved one track across to it. Despite heavy fire from both front and rear, the APC was able to hold the enemy until it was hit with an RPG and burned. The track's driver, although wounded, was able to locate a 3/4 ton truck with 3 flat tires, drove it to bunker 66, and moved wounded to hospital. At the same time, gunships fired rockets down the runway and artillery fired beehive to keep enemy out. Mechanics in bunkers on the south perimeter were also under heavy attack. The wire was breached on both flanks, but they attempted to keep the breach closed even though some of the enemy had broken through and were attacking bunkers 86 and 88 from the rear. The mechanics knew the importance of maintaining their position and held out under overwhelming odds. Many were wounded and one man KIA by an RPG which hit the rear of the bunker. The platoon from Company B which had been moved to the airstrip was ordered to reinforce. Company B was ordered to send another platoon to reinforce Dau Tieng Bridge and Company A was ordered to move to Ben Cui along Route 19 to block. Despite intense fire, the reaction platoon inside the camp was able to reinforce the bunkers. The perimeter was once again restored. As the platoon from Company B approached Dau Tieng Bridge they were met with heavy

RPG and automatic weapon fire. They broke through and reached the bridge to help drive enemy off. The bunkers in the vicinity were low on ammo; seeing this, men began to resupply them with ammo on tracks.

At first light a Chinook which arrived to evacuate wounded was unable to land because the LZ was insecure. Learning of this, mechanics, clerks, and supply troops volunteered to take a VTR (retriever vehicle) , a 3/4 ton truck, and a 2 1/2 ton truck, all with machine guns mounted, to the LZ. Moving through heavy sniper fire they were able to secure the LZ and wounded were evacuated.

From the moment of contact all medics volunteered to assist in the contact area even though it was outside the battalion area of responsibility. They crawled, ran, and drove through enemy fire to assist and evacuate wounded. Company A was ordered to move from its blocking position and conduct a RIF around the outside of the perimeter while a platoon of Company B at the bridge moved into base camp to help find and destroy enemy still inside. At the same time Company C was ordered to move from FSB Wood II, through Dau Tieng into the Michelin.

500 m. east of Dau Tieng, Company C began pushing north along the Michelin truck route. Receiving fire from snipers trying to delay the mechanized infantry company, Company C passed through to establish contact with the withdrawing enemy, eliminating snipers as they passed. Company C's actions drove the enemy into friendly blocking forces in the northern Michelin. All units were successful in completing their mission and by 1000 hours the base camp was again secure.

11. RESULTS: The enemy had attempted to overrun the camp, but were handed defeat. Though the wire was breached in two places, only about 25 enemy got through.

The final results of this attack were 73 NVA KIA (BC) and 14 NVA POW's.

\* \* \* \* \*

Another synopsis re Dau Tieng:

On 23 February, DAU TIENG Base received a mortar and rocket attack followed by an attack by a reinforced sapper battalion. A squad-sized force penetrated the eastern perimeter, made their way into the aircraft revetments and planted satchel charges, damaging two aircraft, one (OV-10) and one helicopter (LOH). A penetration of the southern sector was contained by the interior reaction force. This attack cost the enemy 73 were KIA and 14 POW, 33 weapons and 205 satchel charges were found.

\* \* \* \* \*

At Cu Chi base camp, the night of 23 February, a sapper squad rushed the southern perimeter under a heavy rocket and mortar attack, throwing satchel charges and grenades onto the airfield. Throughout the AO, 25<sup>th</sup> Division FSBs, patrol bases and night laager positions were subjected to mortar and rocket attacks. These were

squad attacks for the most part, and by company-sized units at Dau Tieng and Cu Chi. The ammo and supplies earmarked for the offensive had long since been captured by the Allies.

\* \* \* \* \*

Also on 23 February, 2nd Brigade Patrol Base DIAMOND I, three km from the Cambodian border (XT337187,) 2/27th Infantry, was barraged by mortar and automatic weapons fire starting around 0200 hrs. The enemy mounted a two-Regiment assault from the west and south. In spite of all available fires directed against attackers, they penetrated the protective wire and occupied three bunkers on the southwest perimeter. An ambush to the north found itself on the enemy's flank and began calling in accurate artillery as the first wave fell on the wire. Direct fire from artillery within the perimeter halted and repelled the enemy penetration. At 0530, a sweep of the battle area disclosed 14 enemy dead.

Tomahawks killed in action this day were: George L. Davis and Roosevelt Hardy of A Co, Larry Barker of C Co, and Richard Sweeney of HHC/Recon.

Tay Ninh Base Camp also became the target for a massive rocket and mortar barrage that numbered in the hundreds each night for several nights.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Jan 21, 10*

*Darrell, -- On February 23, 1969, Charlie Co. lost three men due to Cobra Gunships unloading their rockets on our third platoon. I watched it happen and will never forget what it did to those poor guys. Their names were Larry Barker, George Lewis and Richard Sweeney. For many years I blamed the Cobra pilots, but I have since heard, from one of the third platoon guys, that the platoon leader popped the wrong color smoke on his position.*

*Mike B.*

*Jan 22, 10*

*Darrell, -- It was a strange day. We picked up local RVNs, and waited along a road near Nui Ba Den. After a huge B-52 strike, we moved in and found a newly deserted camp with an NVA officer with his foot blown off.*

*We dismounted the tracks and soon after our third platoon had walked into a 51 [enemy heavy machine gun – ed.] nest and we lost an artillery FO, Lt Harold Ring and the platoon Sgt., Roosevelt Hardy. I was with our first platoon and they sent us across a grassy field to try to relieve our third platoon. In the middle of the field two of our Cobras attacked us with rockets and mini gun fire. They made two passes and to this day I am still amazed that none of us were killed.*

*A couple of guys took some shrapnel, but nothing serious. It was later in the afternoon that the other three guys were killed by the rockets. When the Cobras attacked the first platoon, we all prone on the ground. When they attacked our third*

*platoon the guys were all standing up. I learned years later that three of the RVN's that rode in with us were also killed.*  
Mike B.

\* \* \* \* \*

While both DAU TIENG and Patrol Base DIAMOND I were under attack, a third enemy attack developed at FSB MAHONE II (XT521419), located in the TRAPEZOID several km south of DAU TIENG. MAHONE II received heavy SA, AW, RPG and mortar fire. Tear Gas was also used against one part of the perimeter in an attempt to mask a penetration. His attempt failed against coordinated defensive fires. The enemy was forced to withdraw northeast through MICHELIN Rubber Plantation, leaving 38 dead.

On the afternoon of 24 February, an enemy prisoner revealed plans for a second attack on PSB DIAMOND. Radar and visual reconnaissance of movement around the base confirmed this. Interdicting fire and air strikes were begun immediately. At 0100 hrs, the base again came under attack, to which it responded with organic weapons, artillery fire from three batteries, helo gunships, air strikes and artillery direct- fire [beehive and HE], in a continuous coordinated volume. US losses were 1 KIA and WIA. A sweep of the area at dawn found 78 enemy dead.

To the northeast, the enemy again found defeat by a second attack on FSB MAHONE II. Massed firepower as used at DIAMOND I resulted in 24 enemy killed and taking five PWs.

25<sup>th</sup> Division Plans Summary for 26 February gives this Info: **4th Bn 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry (Mech)** (FSB Rawlins-XT297487): **Alpha Co** (Tay Ninh Base Camp) will sweep Hwy 26 with 1 RF Co. **Bravo Company** (at FSB Bragg-XT338583) conducts RIF [Reconnaissance In Force] to XT366528, conducts cloverleaf's, and returns. **C Company** (FSB Rawlins-XT296485) conducts RIF to XT369520, conducts cloverleaf's and returns. **Scout Plt** (Rock Cursher-XT265565) will sweep Hwy 22 to Brigade boundary, then move to Mo Cong and establish VCI operation. **CRIP** conducts local VCI operations.

The Division Base at CU CHI came under attack again, including by Sappers identified from the B-16 Sapper Unit and the newly formed 3<sup>rd</sup> Sapper near Katum, at 0400, 26 February. Fighting began along the northwest perimeter. At 0430, the camp began receiving 122 mm and 107mm rockets and 75mm recoilless rifle fire along with a probe of the west perimeter and then a penetration of the southeast sector, where a sapper team destroyed nine CH47 helicopters and damaged two. The camp's interior defense, air, and artillery fire stopped any further exploitation. 31 enemy were KIA and eight were taken PW. This attack on CU CHI concluded one of the most active weeks of the quarter in which a total 1,038 enemy were killed and 454 weapons captured.

March saw continued heavy activity in all Brigade areas as Toan Thang III gained speed. 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division intensified its search through ground reconnaissance, air-mobile operations, and widespread aerial reconnaissance. This brought success as elements of the Division began to hit the enemy in his staging areas. Among the most successful were those ops in areas controlled by the 2nd Brigade deep within the CITADEL and BOI LOI WOODS.

**On 15 March Ronald L. Pearl of Alpha Company and Benjamin A. Smalls of Bravo Company were KIA.**

\* \* \* \* \*

*Jan 20, 04*

*John/Butch*

*Thanks---*

*We had another FO that was killed in early 1969---I forgot his name----Red head, Stanford graduate---did a great job for us in the field.*

*Roger*

*Jan 20, 04*

*Roger,*

*I was with Charlie Co. in early '69' and I believe the FO you mentioned is Lt. Ring. He was killed the morning of Feb. 23rd. He appeared to me to be a fine officer.*

*Along with the Lt. we had four other KIA's that day.*

*Mike Long*

*Feb 16, 09*

*JM -- Was this [not sure reference to which "this"- ed] at night or day. Were you using an 8" gun firing on the mountain?*

*Recon was securing the 8 " gun*

*Doug*

*Feb 16, 09*

*Doug: To the best of my recollection, the "contact" began approximately late morning with Charlie company on a sweep on the west side of the Mountain (Dau Tieng side; where the big boulders were; just below the saddle at the base of Nui Cau). Charlie sent out two platoons to sweep, with one platoon in reserve. I went with the left platoon; Ross Cicarello and the new 2LT went with the right platoon. We both started to receive fire from both the Mountain and in the grass around us. The CO (Capt., Terry O'Hara) ordered both platoons back, and called Battalion. After a short while, LTC Coggins ordered additional support. That happened shortly after noon.*

*The activity really ramped up about mid afternoon with most of the Battalion involved and on line. We also received 4 dusters. Two on each flank. As I recall, we all pulled back from the Mountain that night, formed a Battalion perimeter; and sent out ambush patrols. However, Brigade also got involved near the end of the first day. Two companies of leg infantry (3/22) were inserted by helo on the top of the*

saddle between Nui Cau and Nui Ba Den either late that afternoon of day one or the following morning (can't recall at this point). This was a really bad move for "The Legs". That is another story.

I do not recall any 8 inchers being moved up, but that is possible. I just don't remember that. I doubt that any direct fire arty was used to our front the next two days, because the 3/22 was working their way down the Mountain, trying to sweep the bad guys to us (didn't work so well). My recollection of Day 1 has been somewhat clouded because of a slight injury I received, but -- due to the nursing skills of John Hyatt, I was able to drink Pussers [a brand of rum -- ed.] yet another day.

Another reason I do not believe that any direct fire arty (especially 8 inchers) was used in our sector is the following --- On day three, what was left of the two companies of the 3/22 had reached the bottom of the Mountain -- out of food, water and ammo. There was about 150 yards of open ground between them and the elephant grass (where we were). The participating line companies (including Charlie) were asked for volunteers to run the tracks up beyond the elephant grass; turn off engines about 50 yards from the bottom of the Mountain -- out in the open --- in very reachable range of RPGs and 51 cal.; ordered not fire any weapons in the direction of the mountain; and wait for the survivors of the 3/22 to run out to us.

You could get some real stories about this event from Ross Cicarello, John Hyatt, Bobby Kammerer, CSM Terry Trobrough, and Keith "doc" Martin.

At the end of day three; a group of triple deuce came up from Hunter to provide some relief, and some of us were sent down to Hunter to fill their slots. Hunter got hit on the third night.

Can't remember much more. Other probably have more succinct memories of those events.

JM

Feb 17, 09 --

This either happened twice or Recon was on the far western edge. I say this and don't remember any dates. But the time we secured the 8" gun it was on the eastern side. Nui Cau was on the western side. Recon arrived almost at dusk (must have been day 2) we picked up the legs and headed home that night. Back to the rock crusher. The rock crusher burned in November 69 so it couldn't have been March 70. Maybe this happened twice, I don't know..... Could you imagine putting people on top and walking down. Now that I write this I think it wasn't legs it was one of our own company's.

Doug

Feb 17, 09

Doug: -- Let me make one correction on my earlier email. The 15-17 March 1970 action took place on the Eastern side of the Mountain -- not western. On the Dau Tieng side, not Tay Ninh base camp side.

Regarding 8 inchers being brought up for directing fire --- I do recall one such event. But it seems to have occurred sometime between after June 1969 (there was a lot of "activity" between early June and September), and on the south side of the mountain --- between Rawlins and The Mountain. It was either directly in front of the

*"Banana Grove", which was to the left of the Pagoda --- or, it was to the right of the Pagoda and directly in front of the giant dry stream bed/waterfall that came directly down the Mountain from top to bottom.*

*I don't recall the designation of the 8" battery (3/13, ????? ). The 1/8 and 7/11 were 105's, and 2/32 were 175s -- I think.*

*Anyway, during that event, I was with Charlie. As I recall, we just pulled back into a perimeter, and those folks with the 8" platoon (2 guns), their FO team, and their security, did all of the work. I can't recall what we did afterwards. Must be old age. Our Arty team at the time consisted of me and 2LT John Knox. We just hung around and drank c-ration coffee --- I think.*

*John M*

*Feb 17, 09*

*This either happened twice, or Recon was on the far western edge. I say this and don't remember any dates. But the time we secured the 8" gun it was on the eastern side [of the mountain.] Nui Cau was on the western side. Recon arrived almost at dusk (must have been day 2) we picked up the legs and headed home that night. Back to the rock crusher. The rock crusher burned in November 69 so it couldn't have been March 70. Maybe this happened twice, I don't know..... Could you imagine putting people on top and walking down?? Now that I write this I think it wasn't legs it was one of our own company's.*

*Doug*

\* \* \* \* \*

3rd Bde oriented its operations toward making contact with the enemy in the MICHELIN and TRAPEZOID, and around the TRANG BANG Base.

On 6 Mar, Charlie Company of 2/22<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Battalion (Mech) made contact with an enemy force entrenched in a bunker complex northwest of DAU TIENG and killed 51.

A second attack on FSB MAHONE II resulted in 21 enemy killed.

\* \* \* \* \*

March also produced several ambushes against Division logistic convoys. Convoying had been vastly improved during the past six months. The method had been changed from merely defending convoys to one of counter-attacking ambush forces. Convoys were reorganized into dispersed march units with additional ground and airborne control elements. Only a small part of the cargo vehicles could thus be caught in the normal 1500-1800 meter ambush killing zone. Control elements could clear the zone rapidly and security elements could immediately establish a base of fire, while pre-positioned reaction forces quickly moved to engage ambushers from several directions. Firmly fixed, the enemy could be destroyed in place by reaction forces, arty, and air strikes.



The first ambush came at 1205 hrs 11 March against the DAU TIENG convoy near BEN CUI Rubber Plantation. Co's A and C, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion 22<sup>nd</sup> Infantry (Mech) blocked escape routes to the north and south, while Company B exerted direct pressure from the east. Combined with this maneuver, artillery and TAC AIR accounted for 77 enemy dead. Three U.S. soldiers were WIA. The convoy arrived at DAU TIENG on time.

**On 22 March LTC Albert C. Butler, Commanding Officer of 4/23 Infantry, was KIA when his command helicopter was shot down,.**

The enemy tried again on 25 March along Highway 19 near [garbled] UIO CAO (XT4528). Troop A, 3/4 Cavalry reacted and combined fire support accounted for another 42 enemy dead.

The month closed with similar intense fighting.

On 28 March, as the Division convoy moved toward TAY NINH along Highway 26. The convoy quickly cleared the killing zone, and Troop A Troop 3<sup>rd</sup> Squadron 4th Cavalry moved to the contact area. Supported by artillery, helicopter gun-ships and air strikes, they routed the enemy, killing 82. Also on this day,

Walter V. Crocco of HHC and Thomas M. Gibson of C Company were killed in action.

On 29 March **Alpha Company 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion(Mech) 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry** while performing mounted reconnaissance ahead of a convoy, encountered a two-Company force in the CAU KHOI Rubber (XT3649) at 1110 hrs. **Charlie 4/23 (Mech)** reinforced and with supporting fires they killed another 41 enemy.

Lt. Victor Pritchard and Frank L. Keck, both of Charlie Co. were killed in action this day.

It is generally considered that this offensive ended in late March. The CHECO [Air Force History Unit] report of the "Fourth Offensive" states, "By any conventional military standards, the enemy's Fourth Offensive was a failure."

\* \* \* \* \*

*emails*

*Jan 11, 04*

*Yes,,, you are right, about the "different wars" comment. I guess we all just "bristled" at the way the original comment was made.*

*After all,,, Tomahawks are known for over-reaction at times...I think the original author of that comment, meant it in the context that we are now taking it..*

*We all had different SOP's as commanders came and went. Some of the SOP's were so drastically different, that we just could not comprehend how some of us were forced to conduct ourselves in the very same conflict and the very same area of*

operation.. (now that is a classic run on sentence. My English professor would be proud of that!)

Re Cliff's comment,, that "Battalion Commanders only had six months to do their job", I didn't realize that the term "rank has privilege" meant quite that much privilege. I thought we "Army guys" were all in combat for 12 months, no matter what rank we held. But,, I won't "dwell and swell" on that any more...

I sit here in the "dungeon" reading and re-reading the official commentary from our officers and I sometimes have to actually admit that I had it pretty easy, responsibility wise, in my little corner of the war.. to worry about.

Cliff, Gary, Carl, et al, had "massive headaches" to take care of, compared to mine.. Filling the shower barrels, getting chow and water, stretched out tracks on the APC, broken torsion bars, warm beer and empty fire extinguishers were worries that were way down on their "to do" lists.. LOL!!

Cliff has sparked another enigma in my memory retrieval. My memory (which BTW is backed by an official daily report) is that My BC between January and June of 1969 was Lt Colonel George E Taylor. I don't remember Col Butler being there in 1969 as several of the 1969-1970 Tomahawks are saying.. But then again, maybe I was a tad bit busy, trying to keep my young ass alive, to worry about "who's who" at HQ..

If you guys are all sure [he] was there until April of 1969,, then,, I will have to go back into my archives and re-write my memoirs.. ARGHHH!!! HOW CAN I BE SO WRONG??!!!!

This picture was taken in March of 1969. It is the **4th / 23rds Battalion** Commander's "Loach".

We were on hi-way 26 road security. CPT "Body Count" ----- told me to put my men in the watermelon field on the south side of the road. We did, as ordered.

About two hours into the operation this "Loach" lands directly behind my track. Out jumps the Battalion CO, who apparently was ----- . The name tag, I thought started with a "T" but I guess I could be wrong. Maybe all I saw was the [one letter in the name tag]. The BTN CO proceeded to lock my fu\*\*ing heels in the middle of a potential battle zone and chewed this young Buck Sergeant's ass up one side and down the other, for of all things, running over two friggin' water melons.

Now here I sit atop a petite, highly maneuverable, 17 ton tracked vehicle... How stupid of me!!! I guess I should have installed side windows in the APC.

At the very least, I should have put some "Curb Feelers" on the sides so we would know when we were too close to a watermelon..

My point is this. From the descriptions of [the officer] and his "charming personality", that I am reading here, and the experience I had in the watermelon patch, it would appear that they are one and the same person.. I guess [the one] must have replaced [the other]... Anyone know the answer to that one? I will have to retreat and re-think all of this. Maybe,, I wasn't in Tay Ninh Province, South Vietnam, after all.. Maybe I'm not a "Tomahawk". Maybe, just maybe,, it was all a bad dream.. WAIT!! If that's the case, where in the hell did this mass of scars come from? HMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM!!!!

*If Lt Col Taylor is still alive, I will have to track him down and apologize for my 35 years of false accusations, by including him in one of my favorite, "You ain't going to believe this", war stories.. BOY! is my face red!!!*

*Rick*

*Jan 11, 04*

*LTC Albert C. Butler was killed in a helicopter crash on March 22, 1969. He jumped from the chopper while it was still about 100ft. in the air. The pilot and artillery FO survived by riding the chopper in. Both were seriously hurt in the crash.*

*The haircut and shaving incident happened on the first meeting with [the Colonel]. He had been in command of the battalion for about a week, but had not met Recon because we were operating separately out of the Rock Crusher. Our missions came over the secure radio the night before, many times dictated by BDE HQ. He was just trying to establish his command. I believe he had the Deputy BDE CO with him which might have influenced his demonstration. I agree with Carl that it was a change in thinking by using the APC primarily as transportation to your area of operations. Col. Neilson and Col. G.E. Taylor were both Armor officers and used the tracks more aggressively. I found Col Butler to be a good CO and an aggressive officer. I had great respect for all the BN CO's. We all did the best we could given the circumstances.*

*Col. Butler replaced me with the Motor Officer. He and I traded places. He reminded me a lot of Col. Butler in appearance and attitude. He was the one that walked into the tail rotor of the LOH. I hated giving up Recon, but I was glad to get off the line. I couldn't stand the rear so after a month I took over 4.2. It was with the four deuce that I saw LTC Butler's helicopter crash.*

*Gary Bennett*

*Jan 11, 2004*

*MEN, -- I HAVE TO JUMP IN HERE GUYS, I'M JIM BOGENPOHL I WAS THE LEAD RADIO OPERATOR IN THE HQ TRACK THAT DAY I THINK MY CALL SIGN WAS EAGLE 3 COL BUTLER WAS EAGLE 1, I WAS TALKING TO COL BUTLER WHEN HE WENT DOWN. HE HAD JUST DEPARTED THE PERIMETER OF THE 9 DAY OPERATION IN THE MICHELIN RUBBER. AND WAS OUT ABOUT 1,000 METERS WHEN HE WAS SHOT DOWN. HIS LAST WORDS WERE SOME THING LIKE THIS (FORM MEMORY ONLY) "EAGLE 3, EAGLE 1 HEADED FOR C.P. 4 (THAT'S A GUESS WHATEVER C.P. HE HAD FOR TAY NINH BASE CAMP.) E.T.A. 12 MINUTES" HE WAS A STICKLER ON RADIO PROCEDURES AND WOULD CHEW YOUR ASS IF YOU SLIPPED UP. NEXT WORDS "BOGIE I NEED HELP" I GRABBED THE MIKE AND RESPONDED WITH "EAGLE 1, EAGLE 3 COME IN..." NO RESPONSE. I HAD THREE RADIOS IN THAT TRACK BRIGADE, BTN, AND A COMPANY RADIO I COULD TALK TO ALL OF THE COMPANIES AND PLATOONS. I TRIED EAGLE 1 ON ALL OF THEM OVER AND OVER, NO RESPONSE...*

*THEN THE TOP SERGEANT CAME RUNNING IN THE TOC YELLING "CHOPPER DOWN" I THINK IT WAS A PLATOON OF 'A' COMPANY THAT WAS ABOUT A QUARTER MILE SOUTH OF THE CRASH, I CONTACTED THEM AND THEY RESPONDED THAT THEY WERE ALREADY IN ROUTE. I ORDERED A*

*MED EVAC, A CHOPPER RECOVERY TEAM AND GUNSHIP IMMEDIATELY, THEY WERE THERE IN ABOUT 20 MIN.*

*I DISAGREE WITH GARY ON THE JUMPING OUT STORY, I DID NOT GO TO THE CRASH SIGHT BUT I RECORDED THE ACTION WORD FOR WORD ON MY RADIO OPERATOR'S LOG! WHICH I WISH I COULD GET MY HANDS BACK ON THO CLEAR UP SOME MEMORIES. COL. WERE THOSE LOGS DESTROYED? OR ARE THEY FILED AWAY SOMEWHERE?*

*THE PILOT OF THE YELLOW JACKET LOCH WAS SHOT THROUGH THE LEFT CALF, AND WAS KNOCKED OUT ON LANDING. THE ARTILLERY CAPT WAS SHOT ONCE RIGHT UNDER THE CHIN AND OUT THE TOP OF HIS HEAD, THE PILOT RETURNED FOR DUTY IN ABOUT 4-5 WEEKS AND HE TOLD ME THIS STORY. (AGAIN BEST OF MY MEMORY) { WE HEADED FOR TAY NINH GOT OVER THE FIRST LINE OF TREES AND RECEIVED ENEMY FIRE. THE CHOPPER STARTED DOWN AND CRASHED WE WERE JUST A FEW HUNDRED FEET HIGH, I (THE PILOT) WAS KNOCKED OUT, WHEN I CAME TO, COL BUTLER WAS GONE, BUT HIS SEAT WAS CRUSHED SO HE HAD BEEN IN THE CHOPPER ON IMPACT. I GOT OUT OF THE CHOPPER AND THE ARTY. CAPT WAS DEAD, I TOOK HIS 45 CAL PISTOL AND MY 357 REVOLVER AND HID IN THE BUSHES UNTIL THE TRACKS GOT THERE. THEY FOUND COL BUTLER ABOUT 1000 FEET FROM THE CRASH BROKE UP PRETTY BAD EXPECTED HE HAD A BROKEN BACK AND THE GOOKS TRIED TO TAKE HIM AS P.O.W. BUT HE COULD NOT WALK SO THEY SHOT HIM. IN THE HEAD.} (END OF MEMORY!)*

*THREE HOURS LATER COL TAYLOR WALKED INTO THE TRACK, HIS PREDECESSOR NOT YET COLD, AND AS I SALUTED HIM HE SAID "AT EASE," SPECIALIST, WHAT'S YOUR NAME? I SAID SP BOGENPOHL, HE SAID WHAT DO THE GUYS CALL YOU? I SAID 'BOGIE' HE SAYS "OK BOGIE I'M GOING TO TAKE A NAP YOU WAKE ME IF SOMETHING HAPPENS" HE TOOK OFF HIS SHIRT AND LAID ON THE TRACKS 5 FT FOLD OUT BENCH AND WENT TO SLEEP! A REAL COOL HEAD ON THAT GUY! NO MORE JOHN WAYNE SHIT AFTER THAT!*

*THAT IS HOW I REMEMBER IT.  
BOGIE*

\* \* \* \* \*

April saw a general decrease in larger enemy-initiated contacts with the exception of the border area, where VC/NVA again made several unsuccessful attacks against 1st and 2nd Brigade Patrol Bases. Indications were that his plans were being modified. He would place increased emphasis on disrupting pacification by attacking GVN controlled hamlets, assassination and sabotage rather than direct attacks on US bases and forces. U.S. Forces would be tied down thru attacks by fire, attacks against MSR's, and by heavy ground attacks along the border close to sanctuaries. As the larger enemy units became scarcer, the 25<sup>th</sup> Division spread its search, using smaller elements over more area via mounted recon such as: Platoon-size Eagle Flights, air assaults, saturation patrolling, LRRPs, visual recon, plus a variety of detection devices. Increased emphasis was placed on combined ops with RF/PFs to

improve their performance and cover more area, and on night ops. These tactics produced results. The number of contacts was high, and the number of enemy killed and weapons captured was the most since May 68.

US reaches peak manpower in-country in April, 1969 at 543,000.

On 2 April, D Company 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion 12<sup>th</sup> Infantry detected movement outside its NDP near TRUNG LAP (XT556219). At 0045, the Company engaged the enemy with organic weapons, supported by artillery and helo gun-ships,. The enemy returned fire with AW, RPGs and mortars, but inflicted no casualties. At first light, Company D counted 49 enemy bodies.

On 3 April, **Alpha 4/23rd Infantry (Mech)**, in a combined op with the 164th RF Co north of the CAU KHOI Rubber engaged an enemy squad and killed six.

5 April saw the beginning of another series of attacks on the 2nd Brigade's PSB DIAMOND II, which had been shifted along the border in the ANGEL'S WING sector to bait an attack. At 0130 the base detected movement and engaged it with artillery. The enemy responded with direct and indirect fire, followed by a ground assault. The defenders reacted with organic weapons, artillery, light fire teams, aerial rocket artillery, and air strikes, breaking the assault and making the enemy pay 20 to 1 for the attempt. Enemy body count was 81. U.S. losses were four KIA, 13 WIA.

The 2nd Brigade area continued to produce major contacts, particularly around the CITADEL. On 5 April, A/2/34<sup>th</sup> Armor made contact with an enemy Platoon north of TRANG BANG. Reinforced by supporting fires, they killed 17 enemy.

On 16 April, Co **B/4/23rd Infantry (Mech)**, while searching an area of previous air strikes (XT031794), found bodies of 93 NVA. That same day A/4<sup>th</sup> Battalion 9th Infantry, engaged 12 enemy near the border and killed 11.

On 17 April the VC / NVA hit PB DIAMOND with 40 rounds of 82mm mortar. Even this limited engagement cost him 20 dead as the base counter-fired with their own mortars and arty.

TAY NINH Base Camp was subjected to similar attacks by fire as DAU TIENG Base during the month. Rocket attacks were made on the 6th, 12th, 13th, and 22nd resulting in one US KIA and 11 WIA.

Capitalizing on the enemy's desire for any sort of victory, the US 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division again set bait near the border.

**On 23 April, William P. Wofford of Bravo Company was KIA.**

On 24 April, the 27<sup>th</sup> Inf dismantled PSB Diamond II and moved it onto the enemy main infiltration route. At dusk they were working in shifts to place sandbags while others stocked mortar and artillery positions. Three listening posts had been set up to

the west, north, and south. By midnight, Diamond III was ready. As the guard changed at 0300 hrs, movement was detected 800 m. southwest of the perimeter. The CP [Command Post] was notified and the first of nearly 2,000 rounds of artillery fell. Bravo Co 25th Aviation Battalion sent gunships. Few GIs were injured as approximately 500 mortar rounds exploded against overhead cover that had been constructed that afternoon. The NVA paused their mortars to allow assault troops to close. Earlier that evening, the western LP was pulled in, and when the attack started the northern LP made it safely in. The post on the east flank, though, was caught between the advancing and retreating enemy and over-run. NVA Battalion moved forward under 800 rounds of mortar and RPG fire, and were launching as close as 30 m. from the perimeter. The 27<sup>th</sup> Infantry, now outside their bunkers, kept the enemy from getting close enough to accurately fire their weapons.

Each bunker had an M-60 machine gun [medium] and many had 90mm RR. As the RPGs struck, sapper squads closed on the wire armed with Bangalore torpedoes and rifles in a desperate attempt to breach the line. Flare ships and night lighting aircraft circled overhead constantly illuminating the scene. As the fight continued, 8 USAF gunships arrived overhead, firing. TAC air came in to strike enemy staging areas, and two 105s fired 300 rds. During the height of the battle, they lowered their tubes and fired point blank into the charging NVA. The heavy fighting continued until near dawn, when the NVA broke contact.

Leaving a few behind to continue the fire, they fell back across the border. Fighting ended shortly after 6:30 a.m. 13 GIs were KIA. [No specific NVA casualties figures given this action.]

\* \* \* \* \*

April totaled 2,058 enemy killed by the Division, a ratio of about 30 to 1. Most significant is that contacts were mostly initiated by 25<sup>th</sup> Div. Even the large enemy attacks along the border were the result of Division plans.

\* \* \* \* \*

Some innovations developed during the period denied enemy use of sanctuaries. The first, "THUNDERBOLT" involves dropping cluster bomb units (CBU) into selected areas to channel enemy movements and bases into target areas which are then saturated with multiple B-52 strikes within a 24 hours period. Choice areas are selected for ground exploitation. Afterwards, both artillery and radar guided air strikes are directed into the area at night to further disrupt enemy attempts to regroup. A similar method named "RED LIGHTNING" first saturates the area with CS (riot control agent) munitions, followed by B-52 air strikes. Again, selected areas are exploited by ground troops and after their extraction; a follow-up by artillery and air strikes is made at night. These techniques have seriously deteriorated the enemy's combat effectiveness by forcing him to move constantly.

NIGHT HAWK referred to illuminating the periphery of selected areas with artillery flares. Within these areas, UH-1 helicopters scan the area with night observation

devices that intensify light provided by distant flares. When targets are observed, they are marked with tracers and accompanying gunships engage them. This technique resulted in eight enemy killed in two separate engagements the night of 27 April and nine enemy KIA in 3 engagements the night of 29 April.

Engineer activity during this period, in addition to their daily functions, was oriented toward the CITADEL. They entered this traditional stronghold and destroyed tunnel complexes, trench lines, fighting positions, punji pits, bunkers, and food/weapons caches. In spite of continuous encounters with booby traps, and numerous attacks against the engineers and their security elements, they destroyed over 1500 meters trench line, 150 fighting positions, 82 punji pits, 350 bunkers, 3000 lbs rice, 1000 shelters and over 150 booby traps. A significant engineer effort was their assistance in establishing patrol bases along the border. This was done so rapidly and professionally that these bases were able to withstand heavy volumes of fire on their first night in place.

Toward the end of the reporting period, the engineers began efforts to relocate some FSBs and to up-grade others in preparation for the rainy season. Preparing lines of communication for the wet season also received increased effort.

During this period there were 81 B-52 strikes of six sorties each flown in support of Division operations. Most targets were in War Zone C, the Crescent, Trapezoid, and Boi Loi Woods. Over 12,000 tons were dropped on troop concentrations, base camp, storage, communication centers, and infiltration routes. A Bomb Damage Assessment was made on each target.

Reports from agents, ralliers and POWs indicated that B-52 strikes greatly added to 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division's combat power, and were largely responsible for enemy defeat in each move he made. These same reports estimate the number of enemy KIA and WIA in the thousands, and large amounts of enemy supplies and equipment destroyed.

During May, the organization of forces in the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade area around Tay Ninh City included **4<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Mechanized) 23<sup>rd</sup> Inf**, 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion 22<sup>nd</sup> Infantry, all supported by 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 11<sup>th</sup> Artillery, and for the first ten days of May, Troop C, 3<sup>rd</sup> Squadron, 17<sup>th</sup> Air Cavalry. **4<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Mech) 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry** was to find and destroy enemy caches and base areas, and elements of the 272<sup>nd</sup> and 273<sup>rd</sup> NVA Regiments and D16 VC/NVA Battalion north of Tay Ninh City and prevent enemy control of Highways 22 and 26.

Following attacks on the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade area, **Co C, 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion (M) 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry**, on a recon mission 10 km north of Nui Ba Den (XT396548) on 13 May, located six enemy bodies who had been killed by artillery. Along with numerous arms and items of ammunition.

At 1300 hours, 23 May, **Alpha Co, 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Mech), 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry** was on a reconnaissance mission in the Cau Khoi Rubber (XT333409) southeast of Tay Ninh City, and located 15 NVA in green uniforms killed by artillery fire.

**Additional Tomahawks killed in action in May with no corresponding operational narratives found were:**

**14 May, 1969 Daniel T. Abney of Bravo Company.**

**14 May, 1969 Tommy L. Brown of HHC**

**15 May, 1969 Walter E. Davis of Alpha Company**

**15 May, 1969 Kennedy Jacques of Charlie Company**

\* \* \* \* \*

Vol 4 No. 21

TROPIC LIGHTNING NEWS

May 26, 1969

**Ambush Kills Six**

TAY NINH - An alert ambush patrol from Company B, 4th Battalion (Mechanized), 23d Infantry, killed six Viet Cong who were preparing two mortar positions. The positions were being readied to launch attacks on a Tropic Lightning fire support base 19 miles north of Tay Ninh City.

"We were lying in the grass when we saw nine VC walk right by us. They calmly started digging twin mortar positions." said Sergeant Richard O. Allen of Enid, Okla. "We waited for a few minutes so they would be wrapped up in their work before we opened up."

In their hasty retreat the enemy left behind one AK-47 rifle, assorted web gear, and twenty 82mm mortar rounds fused and ready to fire.

\* \* \* \* \*

June saw daily contact with small enemy units and a series of attacks which constituted the second phase of their Summer Offensive.

The main thrust centered on Tay Ninh Province, the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade Area of Operations, as the 9<sup>th</sup> VC/NVA Division moved against Tay Ninh City (TNC.) Intel sources indicated the enemy's immediate objective was to enter the city and hold a portion of it and announce the establishment of a VC Provisional Government there. It was to show the populace that the VC could dominate US and government forces. Elements of all four NVA/VC Divisions were identified in the June contacts.

From MACV Summary of Ops June 1969:

On 5 June at 0550 a patrol of the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division ambushed an enemy force of unknown size 7 mi northwest of Go Dau Ha (in turn, 43 mi northwest of Saigon). The enemy returned fire with small arms and automatic weapons. Troops were later supported by helo gunships, artillery, TAC AIR, and other elements of the Brigade. The action ended about 2030, and bodies of 45 enemy were



counted. Also seven individual and crew-served weapons were captured. One US soldier was KIA, and 14 WIA. [No Tomahawks shown KIA this day.]

On the same day, enemy forces moved into Tay Ninh City from northwest, southwest, south, and east.

On 6 June early, the enemy attacked several fire support bases around the city. These included FSBs WASHINGTON, BUELL, AND CROOK , the Tay Ninh Base Camp, and a night defensive position of **4<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Mech) 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry** at the base of Nui Ba Den at grid coordinates XT268564.

Later the same day, (from 25<sup>th</sup> Division Quarterly Report”), **Alpha Company 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Mech) 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry** contacted elements of NVA 88<sup>th</sup> Regiment just outside the northern suburb of Ap Thanh S'on (XT245534) where the enemy had penetrated the city. **Company A** killed 10 NVA with .50 cal fire at a cost of 4 wounded. At 1440 hours, **4<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Mech) 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry** joined ARVN forces to attack the 88<sup>th</sup> Regiment element plus B87<sup>th</sup> Local Force Company and K18AA Transportation Company. As civilians fled the area, friendly forces engaged in house-to-house fighting, killing 42 of the enemy.

The 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division Quarterly Report notes for this date: “At 0915 hours on 6 June the **4/23** was reported in contact in Tay Ninh City vicinity XT 235538. No artillery was employed as grid was in a no fire zone. **4/23** remained in sporadic light and heavy contact throughout the day but conditions did not warrant the Commanding General’s clearance until 1740. At that time A/6/15, B/7/11, C/1/27, and B/2/32 [artillery batteries – ed.] were given fire missions. At 1920 contact was broken. A/6/15 expended 112 HE; B/7/11 expended 193 HE, B/2/32 expended six rounds of 8” ammunition. “

That evening **4<sup>th</sup> Battalion 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry (Mech)** established a night defensive position and at 0400 at (XT383504) detected movement and requested illumination. Perimeter opened fire on enemy troops moving in and killed 5 NVA with auto weapons fire.

**KIAs for June 6, 1969, all from Bravo Company, are shown to be:**

**Richard E. Cyran  
Robert C Essman  
Larry B. Gosch  
John D. Inguillo  
Lt. Duane H. Landwehr  
Carl Lynch  
Dennis J. Manson  
Bruce C. Maynard  
John D. Rhodes  
Richard P Valdez**

On 7 June, at 1440 hrs **4<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Mech) 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry** joined ARVN forces, again in Ap Thanh Son area against the NVA 88<sup>th</sup> Regiment . . . [report cuts off . . .]. Another report states that those troops engaged an enemy force of unknown size 2 miles northeast of Tay Ninh City with organic weapons. Particularly effective were the track-mounted 50 caliber MGs. Nineteen enemy were KIA, five captured, with no US casualties.

On 9 June, the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> ARVN Airborne Battalion southwest of Tay Ninh City killed 86 NVA and took 3 POWs that identified the enemy units as elements of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalions, 277<sup>th</sup> NVA Regiment, supported by the Regiment's anti-aircraft Company.

Another engagement around the city took place this day involved **Alpha and Charlie Companies, 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Mech) 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry** reacting to intelligence reports, fought a three-hour battle against the VC/NVA 95C Regiment 10 km east of Tay Ninh City in the Crescent at (XT387504). **Charlie Company** had found a bunker in a woodline containing 22 rounds of RPG ammunition when the enemy, along the woodline attacked with 12 rounds 82 mm mortar, followed by intense small arms, automatic weapons, RPG and recoilless rifle fire. **Charlie Company** moved forward while **Alpha Company** flanked the enemy on the left, resulting in fighting close-in, bunker-to-bunker in the enemy position. US troops were supported by Artillery and TAC AIR, and eventually 51 NVA KIA (BC) were found at the cost of three US KIA and seven US troops WIA.

**NEW CAMPAIGN TET 69 COUNTEROFFENSIVE 9 JUNE 1969 -- 31  
OCTOBER 1969**

At 0400 next morning, 10 June, **Alpha and Charlie Companies , 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion 23<sup>rd</sup> Inf (Mech)**, in its night defensive position, detected enemy movement which illumination revealed fully. Result: five NVA armed with auto weapons were KIA. Following this engagement, the high rate of action in the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade area subsided for a while C Co. . **Tomahawks killed in action this day per the official database were: James N. Clark, B Co; John S. Hughes B Co; Lt Ronald J. Matel; C Co, Steven W. McCloud; C Co; and Norman W. Teeter,**

\* \* \* \* \*

*emails*

*May 5, 2002*

*Are there any guys that were in on the June 6, 1969 fire fight/ambush out by Nui Ba Den. Trying to find some closure on memories that just won't go away. I don't remember dates well but was with A Co in 69 remember a couple of fire fights by the black virgin mountain 777larger trees that were picking targets.  
"jebossman" [believed to be Joe R.]*

May 5, 2002

Yeah, I recall many skirmishes along the base of Nui Ba Den in the banana groves. However, the big one for me was June 6, 1969. This one really got to me because of the number of brothers that fell that day. It was one hellish fire fight with a lot of close in support from Cobras, etc.

Joe

July 24, 02 (possibly 03)

Boy howdy! Do I ever remember that day! I got my million dollar wound that day.

I was with Alpha Co on 23 track "Cher". On the 5th of June, We set up company sized night laager/ambush between the village and the "Rock Crusher" in support of some ARVNs while they pulled a night ambush south of Nui Ba Din. When the ARVNs came in that morning we supposed to give them a ride back to their compound.. Between 6 and 7 AM all hell broke loose in the village.

The Engineers were coming out to the Rock Crusher with their dump trucks and got ambushed there at the T-road. We could see the guys in the dump trucks still moving so we volunteered to go in and try to get them out. We turned the 50 cal around backwards and lowered the tailgate and backed up the first truck and pulled an Lt. out of it but that was the best we could hope to do. Then they called the Battalion out from Tay Ninh. Since we were on the east side of the village with the "Dusters" from the "Rock Crusher", we had to fight our way around to the west side of the village so we could get all the tracks online for and assault.. My track was third or fourth from the north end I think Bravo Co. joined up on our south (but don't quote me on that). I was shot and dusted off by 5 PM before the assault was even started. We sure took some shit that day.. Who were you with?

Welcome home!

Keep in touch. I haven't found too many guys that were in that firefight..

SSGT Rick L.

Alpha Company(white numbers) Track 23IV "Cher", DEC 68 - 06 JUN 69

,

Dec 30, 2002

Hey Guys,

This is a map of the FSBs in June of '69. A little hard to make out but shows them pretty close. It's an old Forward Observers map. The only bad thing is, Hunter doesn't appear on this map.. Either it was built late '69 or it was not in Tay Ninh's AO.. Maybe it was in Dau Tieng or Cu Chi's AO..

Enjoy

Rick

Jan 14, 03

Ok, It wasn't just me then.. That makes me feel a little better.

The day of the JUN 69 ambush, that ARVN compound that was right there at the intersection was empty when we charged through the intersection.. Those little chickenshit bastards ran home as soon as the NVA fired their first RPG..

We had one RIF operation with the ones across from Rawlins and they were always lagging behind us. I had my squad on left flank and they were supposed to be

walking point but we went through this hedge row and when we came out the other side they were still sitting down back at the edge and hadn't even penetrated the jungle yet. I was a mad SOB over that one and I grabbed the radio and told the platoon leader that we were done for the day.. I wasn't putting my guys out in front of them for any reason and if they weren't going to pull their load I was taking my men home.

I fared better than you did because the BTN CO was overhead in his loach and heard everything I said. He had an ARVN commander with him and they landed right in the middle of the jungle and both of them got out and started chewing their asses.. I thought the ARVN commander was going to start shooting his own men.. The Colonel told us everything would be OK after that and to push on with our sweep.. We went through one more patch of jungle and those bastards start screaming and charging across the clearing.. Damn!! It scared the shit out of me and I told my guys to hit the dirt. I figured they had uncovered an NVA bunker or something and were chasing the enemy.

Yeah RIIGHT!!!!

Those SOB's were after a damn little fallow deer.. They chased it down and caught it and slit it's throat and were all dancing around and celebrating..

I told our platoon leader I had seen enough of these ass holes.. He agreed and the CO said to "saddle up" we were going home.. Trouble was we failed to pass that info on to the ARVN's.. We jumped on the tracks and left those little shits out east of Nui Ba Dinh about 10 clicks from their camp. They had to hump back home that day.. Battalion assured us that we wouldn't have to work with them again.. They could do their part of the war and we would do ours.. No more joint operations for Alpha company.. They were worthless!! Now the Montagnards,, that's a different story.. Those were "strike" troops there..

Rick

Feb 5, 2003

Rick, Ha, I can relate to that Rick. Just didn't want you guys to think took things too serious. Humor always seems to calm me down even in times when you'd think there wasn't anything to laugh about.

Example: In the June 6, 1969 ambush I, along with a couple of the surviving members of Company B, were stranded outside a small hamlet. Two of our APCs had gotten stuck in a rice paddy during the retreat. It had gotten dark and we were ordered to maintain our position till day break. Low on ammo, sopping wet, scared sh---tless, a couple of us huddled in an APC contemplating what to do next. We needed ammo badly, I didn't have a single clip of 16 ammo left, another had no 79 rounds for his blooper, etc, etc.. Someone mentioned there were two bodies lying atop one of the APCs that had ammo vests and unspent ammo clips. We soon realized that we were young inexperienced, in our first real battle, and had never seen anyone get killed. Needless to say, most of us were really spooked and in shock over the day's events. However, we knew we needed ammo badly. So, we decided to draw sticks and the short stick guy was elected to go on a scavenger hunt for ammo. Now, you had to be there to have caught the mood and flavor of this. The guy chosen . . . you talk about a spooked individual. He had us laughing with his facial gestures and whining. I remember laughing so hard that my stomach hurt.

*Anyhow, he went out on the scavenger hunt and returned with the ammo and gave us a full description of how he had approached the two KIAs. With no disrespect meant for our two fallen brothers, this guy gave us such a descriptive facial-expression-show that he kept us all in stitches all through the night. In the midst of utter terror we found our ray of light (humor) to guide our way.*

*Joe*

*Feb 11, 2003*

*Rick,*

*Yeah, I'm just as stumped as you are about the Sgt. Major. One of our first shirts used to occasionally come out to the FSBs. However, like you say, I don't recall him or others ever going out on patrol or any operations with us either. That's not to say none of them ever did. Just can't seem to recall any of them ever going out with us, that's all. I always thought these guys were too senior, and I don't mean their rank, ha, ha, ha. Guess we had one that may have gotten a little too gung-ho or something.*

*Rick\ Nick, I think I've been able to confirm 11 KIAs from B Company on that day. That seems to correspond with my memory banks. The number that has stuck in my mind for years is 28 total losses. However, this was the total number of casualties (KIAs & WIAs). Just couldn't ever sort this number by KIA and WIA.*

*I remember returning to FSB Buell the following day only to find out that our company had been completely decimated. Hell, there weren't enough of us left to mount any kind of operations with. I remember it took us 3-4 weeks to finally get some replacements and get the company re-organized again. That's about the time they sent us over to FSB Hunter. Recall arriving there while the FSB was still under construction. Spent the next few weeks building bunkers, and breaking in some new recruits.*

*I remember we had lost so many track drivers that they had me working with some of the senior grunts, teaching them the basics of driving and maintaining tracks. Of course some of these grunts thought it was great, since it meant they wouldn't be sloshing through the bush and muddy fields anymore. They thought it was great, I thought they were scary, ha, ha. Seriously though, they were all a great bunch of guys. Especially since most of us shared the common thread of being the survivors of the June 6th ambush. Took a couple of guys and molded them into mechanics, ha, ha. One was a young black kid whose last name was Fields, the other guys were Bagado from Hawaii, McGuire from Kansas, and a guy named Jerry but for the life of me I can't recall his last name or where he was from.*

*Jerry was a handful too. He was strange one. Not that he was bad or anything. He was just comically difficult and stubborn as a mule. Hang around him too long and you'd eventually end up in some sort of trouble. Things just happened around Jerry. Like the time he ran over a water buffalo with his track. I was with him too!!!! We had gone into Tay Ninh base camp for some parts and supplies and just missed the last convoy out. So, Jerry says, look man we can catch up to it, this sucker will do 50 mp flat out. So like an idiot I agree with him. So we blast out of the Tay Ninh base entrance heading out through the outskirts of Tay Ninh City, mistake No. 1. Mistake no. 2: Jerry decides his got to stop and visit with a young boom-boom girl. Mistake No. 3: I allow him to and Jerry goes into the tree line with her. Next*

thing we hear is the sound of an AK going off to damn close for comfort. Jerry comes running out, pulling his pants up. Jerry jumps into the driver's seat and we haul ass out. Mistake No.4: About a quarter mile down the road, just before entering Tay Ninh City, we come up on some villagers on the road with a herd of water buffalo. Jerry is driving like a nut and tries to go around them (buffalo) one of them breaks away from the herd and into our path right in front of our track. No way we could stop at the speed we were going. Before you can blink an eye, we drive right over the water buffalo. I snap my head back to look behind us and got a glimpse of that poor animal just twitching on the ground. I yelled at Jerry to stop, but he was so scared (so was I) that he just ignored me. We flew through Tay Ninh City and finally caught up with the convoy going out to Dau Tieng.

Next day CO reported to us that villagers had reported an APC had run over one of their water buffalos. However, with so many APCs moving through their daily, they didn't know whose APC had done it. I kept my mouth shut but went over to Jerry and gave him the tongue lashing of his life.. He never once looked at me, just looked down and away from me. Then again that was Jerry.

Jerry wasn't finished with me yet. He was just getting started. We had one of those slow lazy days, early morning monsoon shower type. Our APC really needed cleaning, so I take Jerry with me and we take the track out on the road outside FSB Hunter. We go out by a drainage canal where we can get water and wash it down.

Pretty soon the coke kids, and of course Jerry's weakness, the boom-boom girls, show up. Jerry immediately starts negotiating with them with C-Ration cigarettes and stuff. I tell him his nuts, and that his just going to catch something from them. Of course, to Jerry that's the same as daring him to do it. Well, a few days later, Jerry starts feeling sick. He starts complaining that his appendix is bothering him. He complains of pain along his mid-section. A few nights later a few of us start up a poker game. After a while Jerry goes excuses himself and goes off to his bunk and lays down because he ain't feeling to cool. About midnight, Jerry starts really howling, the pain is unbearable he says. We call a medic over to take a look at him. Hmm, looks like his may have appendicitis or something. So, he calls in for a Medevac for Jerry. Chopper comes in, we haul his ass out to the chopper and figure, well Jerry's got his ticket home.

Next day, early morning convoy comes through. Truck stops, and who jumps out! Jerry!!!!!! What they hell you doing here I asked. He mutters "I don't want to talk about it". Hmm, something smells real fishy here, I tell myself. Later that day I confront Jerry and ask him for an explanation. Ok man, he says. "I got the Clap", you happy now. At that I rolled over with laughter. He begs me not to say anything to the other guys. I tell him, you nut, don't you think they're going to figure it out for themselves, ha, ha. And with that, I unleashed another tongue lashing barrage at him.

Couple of weeks later, Jerry starts bragging to everyone he was going on R&R to Hawaii. Nice Jerry, just be careful we told him. Words to an empty head. Oh, Jerry goes off to Hawaii alright, he just couldn't stop there. He went all the way back to the states!! He went all the way home, got married, jumped on a plane back to Hawaii, back to Nam, all within his seven day allotted time. Brought back Polaroid pictures to prove it too. We were totally dumbfounded by what he had done. But then again, it was Jerry.

*I think sub-consciously, I may have wanted to get away from Jerry so bad, that I managed to forget his last name. I'm sure its locked up in that black hole somewhere..*

*Joe*

*May 25, 2003*

*Bill -- Dave and Joe are right. There wasn't an air strip on Rawlins.. Just a Helipad.. Oh, and BTW never mind about my question about what your MOS was.. I found out what an 11Delta was.. I had no idea there was an MOS for RECON. How did you earn that rating? Was the a RECON school somewhere?*

*Joe -- You talk about the regular evening mortar round from Charlie.. Have you seen the copies of the "Flashes" on the Division website?*

*In there is a story about how we took the engineers out to this village (I have no idea what the name was) that was just to the south east of Rawlins and built a "good-will" replacement bridge across a canal there.*

*I remember the people weren't friendly at all while we were there. Anyhow, about a month after we built this bridge, Rawlins was hit with a ground attack. After the sun came up, we hauled ass out to that village and went in to search for the VC. We found none of the men between the ages of 15 and 40 in the village. Just the real young or old aged men were there... That's when SOG came in and took a photo of all the family members that lived in each hooch. The next time this happened they went in with the photo's in hand and if anyone was missing, or there were new faces, they were interrogated to find out what was going on or where the new ones came from...*

*We finally found out that this was a VC sympathizer village. Mysteriously, a little later, that new bridge, got blown up and the ground attacks stopped from that side of Rawlins but, there was always one or two mortar rounds delivered each afternoon. I used to suspect that they came from the ARVN compound to the north east and down at the end of the Rawlins road but the guys in the observation tower assured me they were coming from the other side of the FSB. It was then also, that the engineers dug that moat around the base for a little more security.(it was really nothing more than another damn mosquito breeding place).*

*Those rounds weren't anything to laugh off and ignore though, because they usually landed somewhere inside the FSB and it wasn't that big of a firebase to start with. You're right too that you didn't go walking around Rawlins in the afternoon without staying close to a bunker.. We always did our "visiting" after dark when we were there and then it was from PC to PC or bunker to bunker.. No wandering around out in the open.. We also regularly had "zoned" "mad minutes" in the mornings and evenings, before the LP's left the wire or got back in.. I say they were "zoned", because we couldn't fire from the west or north side of the perimeter (Tay Ninh).. If you wanted to clear your .50 of old ammo you would have to move your PC to a side where you could free fire...*

*Back at Ya later*

*Rick "69*

*June 6, 03 -- Doug, - I was with Bravo Company and on June 6, 1969 we were maneuvering to link up with Alpha Company, near the Rock Crusher, when our lead*

element came under an intense RPG attack as we moved through a small hamlet. We took a pretty bad beating that day (lost 3-4 tracks). I believe we had somewhere between 10-15 total KIAs and scores of other wounded. Bravo company was pretty much decimated that day.

That day too was burned in my memory. There hardly is a day that I don't think about it and it's been 35 years ago to the day. Lost a lot of good guys on that day. I was on the 4th track back from the lead track and all three tracks in front of ours went down on the initial attack. We provided all the suppressing fire until we the Cobras and Hueys showed up to help out. Pretty darn exciting day..

Joe R.

Bravo Company 4/23 69-70

June 6, 03

I remember the first part of June 1969, Recon had some intel of an attack. The next morning we were coming out of the rock crusher and I asked the Kit Carson scouts why everybody was coming out of the village so early. He told me NVA in village the next thing the lead track (38) was hit with a RPG. I have a picture of this. We returned fire, turned the corner and spent 4 days in the street. We had our tracks backed up to the Cao Dai Temple walls and the NVA were in trenches on the other side of the road.

The LT. (Bradley) was going to accept ammo at the intersection and as he turned the track a guy opened a front door shot an RPG at the LT that went between his two antennas. Hit a palm tree exploded the shrapnel hit a scout dog in the leg. I think the L. cleaned out his pants after that. Do ya think we leveled that house? I remember this like it was yesterday. My track cut a palm tree down with the 50. I would think there would be an after action report on this. If you can find anything let me know. thanks

Doug

June 6, 03

I seem to remember F-Troop [track name – ed.] on it when I was there. That was May of 7 [??]. Sometimes I think it really fit.

Especially when SFC Robinson blew up the mechanical ambush he was supposed to be setting up. I was security on it and when he hooked the battery to it KABOOOOM! I can see the sentry tower on F-Troop falling over now. I must have missed the note about medals. I would also like to be added to the data base with purple heart, CIB and Bronze star with v device and oak leaf.

Bill

Sep 2, 03

John K will you ask John I if he knows the address of Lt. B? I think he was the Recon LT. when I got in country. He had an RPG shot between his antennas at the Cao Dai temple.

Thanks, Doug



Feb 3, 2003

As I've told Rick before, I was on one of those B Co. tracks that got ambushed during the June Battle for Tay

Ninh. You've raised my curiosity though. Soon after we finally got back to FSB Buell, rumors circulated that our CO had been relieved of his duty. My memory is a bit cloudy about the sequence of events immediately before and following the June Battles for Tay Ninh. Though we all felt that our leadership had broken down during the ambush, we really didn't know what had happened. For sure. I really thought that our XO had been taken out during the initial hit and this led to our being left behind.

I vaguely remember/recall some post-explanation about our CO being on leave and something about some 2nd Lt. XO being placed in charge of our company in his absence. If I'm not mistaken, this young and inexperienced XO was who led us on that tragic June 6, 1969 date. Never saw either one of them again afterwards. My memory stinks, ha, ha. I can't seem to be able to put these events in their proper order. However, this I do know, B Company had at least four different CO's and XOs during my one year tour.

I knew something went seriously bad on that day and we sustained heavy casualties as a result. Mostly though, I remember a mixture of feelings of fear, anger, and great sadness over the loss of so many. I never looked to blame anyone, just had a difficult time trying to make sense of it all. In retrospect, I guess, like most us, I accepted the fact that "sh---t happens" in war and we all learned how to deal with it in our own personal way. Sometimes we were good at it, sometimes we failed miserably. But then again, we were only being human with all its fallacies Joe.

Sent: Monday, February 03, 2003 1:48 PM

Subject: [4th23rdmectomahawks] Re: My time in Nam

Yes Rick that's him. I had forgotten his name. He was directly responsible for most of the casualties that B Co took as well A Co and even some in C Co by the time it was all over. At one point The Battalion Commander had to land next to his track to give him direct orders on what to do. Rick I have posted a photo of the second platoons medic in photos in the 4th 23rd 69 folder, take a look and see if you recognize him. As a side note when A Co returned to Tay Ninh, He did not sleep in his hutch in the company area for fear of being fragged.

Richard Class of 68/69

(Unkn)

I have to laugh at your comment about the CO.. Are you talking about Capt. Blades? Boy what a piece of work he was.. I got an Article 15 from him because I let the coke kids up around our PC while we were on road security in the rubber along 22 during the spring of '69.. Did you get to see his command track with that Mini-gun on it? It came out of a downed Loach and I think it was damaged beyond repair. They would try to fire that thing and it would get off about 10 rounds and jam.. What a wasted piece of dead weight that was..

There was a lot of speculation amongst the troops, that he graduated 502 in his class of 500 at "The Point"..

Anyhow you say you were on the radios during the fight in June... I was the first or second dust-off that day..

*We all had our hands full all day but, the poor Bravo boys got their butt's spanked hard..*

*We had made contact the night before over by the "Rock Crusher"(ever see an ambush set up with APC's? no RPG wire, no claymores, no nothing. Just the 50 cal.) Those bastards (the VC) were so well equipped they walked right up to us that night, without any fear at all.. They broke contact after a couple of pot shots and just detoured south around us and took over the city.. The guys with the "Starlight" scopes said they thought they were seeing a long line of them just sauntering into town. We found they were right when we tried to saddle up to go home the next morning. We couldn't get back into town.*

*Bravo company came out that afternoon to help us. They thought all of the VC were concentrated in front of us. They knew that the road wasn't secure, so they were driving north on the west side of town, about 50 meters out in the rice paddies, trying to link up with A company. ALL HELL broke loose when they were still about 100 meters to our south.. Those PC's with their sides to the gooks was too much temptation I guess.. Jeez! It was terrible.. The battle front was at least a half mile to a mile long..*

*I was un-lucky in getting shot but, I was lucky because I got out of the game 15 minutes after it started..*

*Anyhow, if you had anything to do with getting that "Dust-Off" out to me I want to thank you Bud.. It was pretty serious by the time I got to Hospital. BUT, it wasn't too late....*

*Rick  
class of '69*

*June 7, 03*

*I always wondered who had our left or west flank. I wondered who secured the rock crusher the nights we were out. I wanted a bigger picture than I have or had. I guess I was focused in keeping our guys alive, keeping the ammo up, working together so the fire didn't slack off. We had several guys wounded but didn't have anyone killed in that firefight.*

*What time of day did you guys move into the area? We got hit at 7Am. Thanks for all your help, we needed it. Over the past many years I didn't know who to thank. I remember the final straw that broke them was the air force jets dropping bombs. We were asked to pop smoke for them. I threw one about 20 feet in front of me and said "Danger Close". We were just a small platoon of 10 tracks. I guess that's a big platoon. Battalion thought we were Company size by the way we got missions.*

*After it was all over I lead a team from Recon, inside the village to behind the homes to count bodies. We interviewed many civilians. I remember going into the hutch that the guy shot the RPG from and I looked out the 50 holes in the walls. You're correct it was a tough few days.*

*Doug*

*June 8, 03*

*Hey Doug, -- I was at FSB Buell the morning of June 6<sup>th</sup> [1969.] Early that morning we were probed, mostly harassed, by a barrage of RPGs. I was part of a plt-size unit that was sent out to suppress the enemy fire hit-ting us from the direction of the Rock*

*Crusher. We spent the most part of the morning and afternoon chasing a small probing NVA unit. We took allot of small arms fire but no casualties that morning. We spent the afternoon just moving about trying to draw fire and calling in artillery wherever we could draw fire from. From time to time, a small two-seater Vespa would show up and fly low along the tree lines trying to draw fire too.*

*Sometime between 3-4 PM that afternoon we linked up with the rest of our company and started moving up towards the road that lead to the Rock Crusher. I recall going across some real muddy rice paddies and emerging just east of a small village. One by one our tracks made it to the road as our lead tracks paused to wait on the trailing track. The radio communications indicated that we were moving up to link up with Alpha Company which was on the other side (west of the Village) and that Alpha Company was engaged in some action. Once all our tracks were finally lined up on the road we started rolling cautiously through the village. As I once mentioned to Rick, it was a really eerie feeling, seeing villagers standing at the doorways of hooches, just starring at us as we went by. Mind you, this was a very narrow road and most of the hooches couldn't have been more than 10-20 yards back from the road. Most of us on the track felt it very strange and decided to prepare for a possible engagement as we neared where we thought Alpha Company was. I recall slipping on my flak jacket and moving around some ammo cans so we could easily get to them if needed. Just moments after moving to the center of the village all hell broke loose. I was on the 4th track back from the lead track. All three tracks in front of us were either hit by RPGs, or driver and TCs took direct hits from small arms or mortars or all the afore-mentioned. We instinctively reacted into ambush mode and starting laying out suppressing fire, as we witnessed the lead tracks coming under a barrage of small arms and RPG fire. I am not certain, but I believe there were also mortars being leveled at us.*

*As the ambush developed, some Hueys and at least one Cobra appeared directly overhead and started emptying their rocket pods on the hooches on the north side of the road, directly in front of our track. My track was ordered to stay in position while a few of the tracks tried to maneuver around us to help the guys on the lead tracks that were pinned down. One by one we watched the tracks move up from behind us in an effort to assist those of us that were caught in the ambush kill zone. With exception of one track, none of these tracks that went around us ever came back to our position. The one track that came back across had only a driver and two KIAs on top of it. Communications by this time was really bad and we had no idea what the hell was happening to the guys on the lead tracks or to the tracks that had gone around us. All we knew is that we were obviously in the middle of an ambush kill zone and we were trying desperately to get our wounded and KIAs out as best we could. At one point we could see NVA troops squirming around in front of us moving towards us, firing small arms and RPGs towards us. However, we managed to keep them at bay with our 50's and the Hueys up above us.*

*The entire firefight lasted about an hour to an hour and a half. As I recall, by dusk we had lost all communication with our CP group and were sitting in the middle of the village waiting for the rest of the company to come back and join us. It never happened!!!*

*We didn't know it then, but our track along with, I what I recall were, three other tracks were all that was left of the approximately 10-15 vehicles that*

*started out across the village that afternoon. That wasn't the end of it either. As it appeared we had no communications with our CP group and it was quickly getting dark, a decision was made, by who I never knew, that we should retreat back to FSB Buell. I think we all believed that with the exception of a few KIAs and wounded, that the rest of the company had made it safely across the village and that it would be too dangerous to attempt a link up in the darkness. Therefore, we started back-tracking back towards FSB Buell as darkness was quickly approaching. It was getting a bit dark by the time we reached the eastern outskirts of the village. I recall watching the lead track as it made a right turn off the main road and attempting to cross a muddy rice paddy. I watched in horror as one behind the her, the two lead tracks sunk into the flooded rice paddy. Unbelievable! If it wasn't bad enough to have been separated from the rest of the company, now we were up to our gills in a flooded paddy. Fortunately, we managed to maneuver our track up on higher ground closer to the village hooches and avoided getting stuck ourselves. However, we had two vehicles mired like "sitting ducks" in a pond, next to an NVA infested village! What next!!!!*

*Well, our guys finally re-established communication with our command group. Who ever was calling the shots now ordered us to maintain our position till day break. Only problem was, we were out of freaking ammo and sitting just a few hundred yards away from where we initially got hit. No dice, was the word we got. We were to maintain our position till day break. Within a matter of minutes a Huey shows up and I believe dropped off an FO, because the word quickly spread that artillery suppressive fire would be starting soon and would be kept up through the night. We were told to bring in any LPs and tighten our perimeter around the disabled tracks. By now it had started raining making for an even more miserable, if not memorable, night.. Anyhow, the artillery barrage started with the first rounds lasting about 15-20 minutes. I swear we could see those damn shells flying across our heads as they landed all around us, mostly between us and the village. During several pauses Hueys started showing up bringing badly needed ammo and C-Rations. I mean, our track was down to the last few 50 ammo cans and we had absolutely no 16 ammo cans only 2-3 clips is what I had. Up to time the Hueys started showing up, we had been running around scrounging up and rationing out M-16 ammo. We even took ammo off of the two KIAs we had with us, that's how bad it was.*

*We all had seen the NVA in the village that afternoon, so we were pretty damn sure we were going to get hit again that evening. However, that FO, whoever he was, seemed confident that the artillery barrage would keep them back and kept up harassing fire all through the night. Needless to say, I believe many of us made our peace with God that night. I don't think any of us slept a wink, as we sat, waiting for what we believe would be an inevitable sneak attack. There we sat, rain pounding on our steel pots, soaking wet, hearts pounding, wondering if the noises coming from the flooded paddies, were actually "Gooks" sneaking up or just freaking frogs jumping around in the dark water.*

*It was a long freaking night, but we made it without further incidents. At day break we pulled the stuck tracks out, got our "sh---t" together and finally headed back to FSB Buell. The real shocker came when we learned that, with the exception of couple of guys that had stayed behind pulling garrison duty, we were all that was*

*left of the one hundred plus members of Bravo Company. I believe we were about 20-30 that got stranded in the ambush and maybe one platoon which had stayed behind at Buell, and that was all that was left of Bravo Company on June 6th, 1969.*

*Later on the morning of June 7th, I was asked to help carry some of the bodies out to the heli-pad. I recall my body and mind going numb as I tried to recognize some of bodies, but I couldn't because their faces were swollen beyond recognition, most had had head wounds which made it impossible to recognize. I don't think I ate for two weeks after that. So yes, June 6th was forever engraved in my mind.*

*Joe R 4/23 Bravo Company 69-70*

*June 8, 03*

*Rick: -- My memories of 4/23 start on the afternoon of June 5<sup>th</sup> [69?] (having joined Charlie company that day). I initially thought that there would be a "honeymoon" or Phase-in period. However, as soon as I arrived at Company HQ in Tay Ninh Base Camp, I was told that the Company either was in contact or had some contact that day in or around the city. I was tasked to "participate" in an ambush patrol that night (5 June) a little north of base camp toward the mountain. As I recall, we heard a lot of movement, and right before midnight we were informed to move out of our ambush site and proceed a couple kilometers to a pickup point.*

*This went pretty smoothly, and we were picked up by a platoon of APCs --- but not from "C" company. It may have been Recon --- but not sure. We were returned to Tay Ninh base camp about 3AM. We then learned the reason for the pickup ----- too much movement; too much contact everywhere else; too dangerous and too exposed, and that we were going into Tay Ninh City at first light -- 6 June.*

*We (Charlie Company) did move into the City at first light and moved down the main street (actually the main "elevated" dirt road within the city) in a single Company file formation. First platoon at the point (4 tracks), Command element next (Command track, Medic), everybody else behind. When the entire company was committed and in single file on that road, the whole world came apart. I was on the Command track (fifth vehicle) -- it was a sight to behold. It seemed like hundreds of RPGs being fired simultaneously from both sides of the road --- from the houses and huts; from the road gutters; from behind and in trees. I can still see it. It was like driving through a canopy of trees or through a tunnel. What was even more amazing was that we didn't all die. We had a lot of casualties and several tracks were hit, but all of the tracks immediately answered with their 50's and 60's. I was pretty impressed with these guys that day. As we moved down the road, very often tracks had their weapons staggered left and right and were prepared to fire --- and did so immediately, and quite effectively. It was one hell of a way to welcome a new guy into the unit.*

*Another thing that struck me quite personally. Up to that point, I spent several months supporting the SF and other Special Ops teams in the Province. I was getting or already had delusions of grandeur. I was a little let down --- and many times afterward. In my time in-country prior to joining 4/23, I had experienced a lot of contact --- but nothing as large, intense, and immediate as that day. In that instant ---- I was truly humbled by the heroism and abilities of these men from the 4/23. A few weeks later I had the opportunity to go back to my previous assignment supporting the SF teams. I couldn't go back!!!!!!*

Anyway, the message here is that Charlie company was heavily involved and exposed on the main road in single file, and those damn guys were all heroes. I often wonder whose hare-brained idea that was.

Thanks all.

John M.

July 25, 2003 (?) --

I was with Bravo Co. and you are correct. Bravo Co was attempting to link up with Alpha Co from the south. I was riding on the fourth track from the front as we approached the village when all hell broke loose. The three tracks in front of us all got hit with RPGs.

My track came under heavy small-arms fire but we managed to maintain position while the rest of the column moved up to assist. I recall there was an APC to our right with a platoon Sgt and squad leader riding on top. As the fire-fight intensified, the Sgt on this track yelled for us to cease firing so he could re-position his track. The track moved across our front and moved up the road a bit. Next thing we see is his track hauling-ass back with everyone on it, except the driver, wounded or killed. Radio communications indicated that Alpha was also taking heavy casualties further up the road. I remember hearing our driver screaming on the radio for more close-in support and moments later the Cobras circled right above our track and unloaded their rocket pods and mini-guns on the huts alongside the road. I remember jumping off my track and seeking cover in the drainage ditch behind our track. There was debris falling all around like rain. After what seemed an eternity, the heavy fire subsided and I managed to get back on the track. Next thing I see are regular NVA sneaking up from our left flank and front. At first we thought they were friendlies but we quickly found out otherwise as they opened up on us. We again opened up with our 50s, 60s, 79s, and LAWs, throwing everything but the kitchen sink at them. As the Cobras swooped in on them again, they retreated.

The day wasn't over though. The radio was crackling with KIA and WIA reports and calls for assistance. We were stunned at the number of casualties we were sustaining. We were ordered to hold our position so that rescue and recovery missions could be mounted. Unbelievably, it was during this activity that our platoon got caught off from the main column and somehow ended up stranded behind. As the fire fight had been so intense, linking up with A Co had been impossible, our platoon was therefore ordered to retreat by back-tracking out of the village. Unfortunately, it was late in the day and night had come as our platoon leader tried to get us out. As we moved out of the village the lead tracks headed out across a rice paddy and ended up getting stuck. As any attempt to pull tracks out at night would have been too risky, our platoon was therefore ordered to hold its position until day light.

It was quite a memorable night. One which was forever etched in my mind. A bunch of scared walking wounded (myself, tiny shrapnel wound in my shoulder) with little or no ammo left, no food, stranded in a village infested with NVA regulars. If that wasn't enough, we were all "spooked" by the number of KIAs we had witnessed and by the KIAs we hadn't been able to get dusted-off. We had 3-4 AP's (two got stuck in the rice paddy) and several KIAs with us. We all expected to be hit during the night and some of the guys were panicky as we had spent most of our ammo

during the ambush fire-fight. We rationed what we had and scavenged what we could from our own KIAs. We did everything we could to keep our spirits and hopes up (prayed a lot that evening). We nervously teased each other as we drew (short-sticks) on who would go around and take the ammo clips off of our KIAs.

There was this guy (can't remember his name) that got the short stick and got the gruesome task of rounding up ammo for us. This guy was unbelievable as he kept us laughing as he would comically recount to us his scavenging runs. He distributed everything he retrieved amongst our squad. Amidst all the chaos and death this guy made us laugh at ourselves. His humor and wit got us through the night. That night we were 'One' unbelievably solid unit. Needless to say, we were all very nervous and tensed. Our laughs were tainted with the thoughts of our KIAs, WIAs, and the belief [expectation – ed.] of an inevitable hit during the night.

Fortunately, HQ was aware that we had been caught off the main column and were stranded and ordered an all night artillery "barrage" of the area around us. An FO, more ammo, and rations were choppered in through the night. The FO did a great job gridding the area nicely. I swear we could see the rounds coming in across the rainy and partially moonlit sky. The intelligence reports had indicated that the village was surrounded by NVA HQ informed us that they would be unleashing everything it could to keep them at bay. We learned what the term "hunker down" meant that night. I was convinced that one of our own rounds would most likely do us in. Some of the rounds were landing almost on top of us. During the night the village was virtually obliterated.

Later that evening choppers started coming in to re-supply us. I volunteered to run up to the choppers and retrieve some M-16 ammo. In the blinding rainy night I ran across a rice paddy dike to a chopper and grabbed a crate of M-16 ammo. As I was running back with it, I came across the FO as he was directing another fire mission. Unbeknown to me, he happened to be standing next to a water well hole. As I attempted to go around him, I stepped right into what seemed to be a bottomless pit. I thought, oh hell, after all this now I'm about to drown. Just then I felt someone pulling at me from the straps of my flak jacket. The FO had reached down and literally pulled my butt right out of the hole. I never let go of the ammo box though, ha, ha. He chuckled as I composed myself and continued my jack-rabbit dash to my squad. We had a few more nervous laughs as I told the guys what had happened to me.

The all night artillery barrage kept us up all night, but it successfully kept the NVA at bay. Day light came with a strange calmness in the air. As I made my rounds to check on the tracks (my assigned responsibility) the mood was very subdued almost numbing. As I supervised the recovery of the stuck tracks, our platoon regrouped and started a very somber track back to our home base.

Back at our fire base, the mood was very somber and strangely peaceful. Around mid-morning a medic popped his head into our bunker and asked for help loading some of our KIAs on the choppers coming in to pick them up. I volunteered and walked over to the medics tent to help. I'll never forget this task. The faces, the odor of gun powdered burned flesh, and that terrible slow walk to the helipad area. Not a single word was uttered. We were all speechless. As I completed my task, I stepped back and watched as the chop-per lifted-off and took our fallen brothers away, never

*to be seen again. I have forever wondered who they were and have tried to imagined how their families must have felt upon receiving news of their loss.*

*By my recollection, Bravo Company started the day with approximately 90-120 members. I think there were approximately 30-40 of us left after June 6. We spent the next few months re-fitting. My adventure continued with a whole lot more "Summer 69" "action around the "Black Virgin Mountain".*

*SP/5 Joe R (Knucklebuster)*

*Sep 2, 03*

*John K will you ask John I if he knows the address of Lt. B? I think he was the Recon LT. when I got in country. He had an RPG shot between his antennas at the Cao Dai temple.*

*Thanks, Doug*

*June 19, 2003*

*If this was in April-May 69' I had a front row seat to a direct hit to the fuel dump, ha, ha. I had gone out to the out-house about midnight and was sitting on the golden throne when the damn rockets started hitting. Had to make a mad dash to the nearest bunker. Don't recall ever wiping my ass as I exited the out-house running for cover, ha, ha. The explosion lit up the night like daylight. If I recall correctly, there was a medic station and 4/23 Company HQ hooches just across the road from one of the fuel dumps. I had only been in country a few weeks and was in Tay Ninh working in the motor-pool waiting for my assignment to field duty.*

*Joe*

*Jan 11, 04*

*LTC Albert C. Butler was killed in a helicopter crash on March 22, 1969. He jumped from the chopper while it was still about 100ft. in the air. The pilot and artillery FO survived by riding the chopper in. Both were seriously hurt in the crash.*

*The haircut and shaving incident happened on the first meeting with [the Colonel]. He had been in command of the battalion for about a week, but had not met Recon because we were operating separately out of the Rock Crusher. Our missions came over the secure radio the night before, may times dictated by BDE HQ. He was just trying to establish his command. I believe he had the Deputy BDE CO with him which might have influence his demonstration. I agree with Carl that it was a change in thinking by using the APC primarily as transportation to your area of operations. Col. Neilson and Col. G.E. Taylor were both Armor officers and used the tracks more aggressively. I found Col Butler to be a good CO and an aggressive officer. I had great respect for all the BN CO's. We all did the best we could given the circumstances.*

*Col. Butler replaced me with the Motor Officer. He and I traded places. He reminded me a lot of Col. Butler in appearance and attitude. He was the one that walked into the tail rotor of the LOH. I hated giving up Recon, but I was glad to get off the line. I couldn't stand the rear so after a month I took over 4.2. It was with the four deuce that I saw LTC Butler's helicopter crash.*

*Gary Bennett*



Jan 17, 04

*Been trying to remember some specific things and places. Been looking through some photographs.*

*Does anyone remember a one day operation [early '69] going way West of Nui Ba Den toward Cambodia? We went to a village named Mo Cong which was reportedly something like 70% VC. It was the celebration of the opening of their new Cao Dai Temple. We provided security and I think, but I'm not sure, some brass flew in to have a drink with the priest(or whatever they were). I remember because the pucker factor was extremely high and we were way out of our usual AO. That may also have been the day that one of our forward tracks hit a boar pig that ran out between the tracks. The boar wasn't killed but I think the Brigade S-5 paid them about \$300 for the badly scared up hind quarter. We didn't even get a ham sandwich.*

*Thanks,  
Carl G*

Jan 31, 04

*Rick forgive me for not responding sooner. I have been on an emotional roller coaster since I have started PTSD treatment at the Denver Vet Center. I have been trying to remember all of the details of those two days. Some of this was posted last year when you were trying to find the person who called in the dust off that got you out.*

*On the morning of June 6 69 we received a call at BN Commo from Rawlins via land line that Bravo Co was in trouble in Tay Ninh. ( We thought it was Tay Ninh proper; it wasn't until later that afternoon that we found out it was Tay Ninh City) and that Alpha, Charlie and Recon was on their way to help. We were told that we were to be a radio relay station if needed, also to setup a third radio on either the Regiment or the Brigade frequency (cannot remember which) in case the Battalion Cmdr was not able to get in touch with Cu Chi. As we were monitoring LTC Taylor was frantically trying to get in touch with Alpha company as to their location. When he finally located them he kept circling trying to make contact and yelling in the radio. After a short time LTC Taylor radioed us to see if we could establish contact with Alpha company. We did not have any better luck. At this point LTC Taylor located the command track and told the pilot to set down as close the command track as possible. After several minutes LTC Taylor was again air borne and he informed us to keep the our company radio on Alpha Company's frequency for the time being. I don't know what happened while he was on the ground but he was sure hot when he radioed us. After that it was obvious the he was giving direct orders to CPT Blades and never let Alpha company out of sight for too long.*

*As to CPT B. being relived, he was not. I found out later that LTC Taylor would have if there had been someone available to replace him. As far as I know he was still in command of Alpha company when I left in August of 69. As I told you Rick the sh%\$\$^hit the proverbial fan after that action. We had officers all over the place in the BN area and I was on the phone for an hour and a half with a LTC from Regiment who wanted to know about the Battalion's communications (IE) why we had so many radios over TONE and the communication breakdown on June 6th and 7th.*

*I know that after that phone call that we had to check out every radio in the*

*Battalion. Alpha was the first company to come in than Bravo and Charlie. I think we also checked out Recon. As for Flame and 4 deuce they must have been checked out at Rawlins. I hope this sheds more light on those two days.  
Richard (mouse) 68/69.*

*Jan 28, 2004 Rick: My memories of that day, and the following 7 days, are very general versus as detailed as your memories. Generally, the sight of the action on the road into Tay Ninh that morning was a sight I will never, never forget. Right out of the movies. But, let's get to some chronological memories.*

*June 5th:*

*o I was attached to a unit in Northern Tay Ninh province near Prek Klok, just south of Katum -- providing FO support.*

*o About mid afternoon I was told to pack a bag, I was being moved South immediately to provide support to a Mech Infantry unit of the 25th DIV. Why??? The Unit was certain to hit heavy contact within the next couple of days and the assigned FO was on R&R, the RTO had been wounded, and the Recon SGT was within days of DEROS.*

*o About 5PM, I was taken by jeep convoy, then helo, to an area called Trang Sup, just west of Nui Ba Den. Arrived about 7:30PM. I did not know then, nor do I know now what unit was there. However the unit was in laager and, as I shortly learned, about ready to leave a "stay-behind" ambush and return to some unnamed base camp o Upon arrival an officer (Capt. as I recall) greeted me and immediately asked if I wanted to join Stay-Behind Ambush Patrol. I agreed, left my bag with the officer, and stayed behind (Note: I never saw that bag again).*

*June 6:*

*o About midnight we received a message to leave our ambush site, and march to a pickup point approximately 2KM from our current site. REASON: There was too much "movement" in the area, and we probably could not be supported if we had contact. We moved to the pickup point without incident, but saw lots of flares in the sky.*

*o We were met by a platoon (4 tracks) of mech, and drove about 30 minutes to a small base camp. Arrived sometime after 3PM. I don't know what unit did the pickup, or even if it was part of the 25th.*

*o Upon arrival, I was alerted by a SFC (I think) that I should be prepared to immediately be helicoptered to Tay Ninh base camp to link up with Charlie Company (4/23). we departed about 4AM for a very quick flight (less than 15 minutes).*

*o Upon arrival at a helipad, I was taken by jeep to the Charlie company HQ Hooch.], and was met by a Lieutenant (the XO). I*

*remember he had red hair, wore glasses, and was not wearing his camo shirt. However, he was wearing what looked like the tops of Long underwear (long johns). I subsequently learned that he was a Mormon and he was wearing a "Garment". This was memorable because (a) this was the first Mormon I had ever met, and the first time I had ever heard of "The Garment". The time was about 5AM.*

*o I was told that I should draw as much ammo and water as could carry, and pick up a load of PRC 25 batteries. I was about to be sent by Jeep to join Charlie company who was at their LD (Line of Departure) on the outskirts of Tay Ninh City. I jumped into a jeep driven by a person from Supply, and a medic. The time was about*

5:30AM.

o At about 6:15-6:30AM (approximately) , I joined Charlie company who was already in single file on the elevated dirt road into Tay Ninh city. As I came to find out, the Cao Dai Temple was down at the end of this road, about a mile or so. I delivered the radios to the Deuce (Command) track, and was told to jump on the Medic track directly behind the Command Track. I jumped onto a smoke grenade box to the right of the cupola.

o As I sat there, daylight was about full, and from the top of the medic track I looked down the file of tracks in front of the Deuce track. As I recall, there was one platoon (1st platoon, 4 tracks) and one other track (fifth track) directly behind the 1st platoon and directly in front of the Deuce track, It was either the maintenance or supply track. All cupolas were manned and all personnel were mounted on top of the tracks. I could also see the file of tracks behind , but could not see the last tracks because the road bent slightly to the left from my vantage point, and those tracks were hidden by trees and "houses".

o NOTE: At this point, for some reason I was in possession of my own PRC 25, and had it tuned to the company net.

o Sometime before 7AM (very approximate) the CO have the order for the lead platoon to "move out". They did so. After the platoon moved about 50 meters, the fifth track got the order to move out. After they moved about 25 meters, the CO gave the general order the for column to move out in file. The Deuce track was the sixth track and I was on the 7th track, with a full view of all tracks moving in file up front. Our speed was very slow and deliberate -- perhaps less than 5MPH. After moving for a couple of minutes, I looked back in the file and thought I could see the end track in the column. It appeared to be standing off a few meters from the main column, and acting as "tail gunner".

o At this moment (may have lasted less than a minute) I stood up and took a good look around --- I actually turned around 360 degrees (6400 mils in Arty speak), The hard pack dirt road was elevated above the village (city), which paralleled the road on both sides. There were tall tropical trees (at least 12"-24" inches in diameter) that started at the base of the road ditch and extended back through the houses. As the trees extended further away from the road, the amount of trees thickened. The houses were mostly huts of all types. The houses nearest the road were located approximately 15 yard from the elevated center of the road. There was smoke coming from some of the houses, and from some outside fires. There were a men scattered around, I don't recall seeing any women, and there were NO children or animals.

o As I made my full 360 turn and was now standing straight up facing front, the most incredible set of events unfolded that likely are impossible to adequately describe. Without any warning, RPGs began to fly from both sides of the road. They seem to come from the ditches, the huts, from behind the trees. The initial volley went over the 1st platoon tracks, forming a canopy-like effect over that platoon. Then, each 1<sup>st</sup> platoon track took one or more hits, each in succession. The first, then the second, then third, then fourth. Several events were happening in parallel:

o (1) every track (the .50 cal and M-60's, and every man) simultaneously began firing to the left and right. NOTE. I did not have my radio phone to my ear, so did not

hear any of the CO's orders). It the sound was unimaginable;

o (2) The Umbrella of RPGs (it seems as though most of the RPG were firing high and going over the tracks -- probably because many of the bad guys were firing from an area below the road and were misjudging their aim) was coming from both sides of the road. It first looked like tens of missiles, then hundreds. The effect was mesmerizing. I could see the RPG firings slowly (and the "umbrella") working its way down the column toward me --- almost in slow motion.

o (3) Everyone started to dismount into the ditches to get off those damn tracks (now possible death traps) and to engage the enemy that could be seen.

o (4) The cupola's of every other track, probably on order, pointed to the alternate side of the road. Those crew served weapon on the tracks were nor firing into the trees and huts, and over the heads of the dismounted troops in the ditches (no engaged in fairly close contact).

o (5) The column continued to move forward slowly to secure the first platoon, and to support the dismounted troops now maneuvering o From this point on, I was dismounted with members of the 3rd platoon, who were called upon as a reaction force to reinforce and secure the 1st platoon. The situation lasted until about noon. We got an emergency resupply of ammunition and water. I believe that Charlie company lost two or three tracks, and many more were hit in some capacity, but not disabled, The deuce track was hit at least three times, but with only lucky "grazes": Once on the top at some protrusion, Once on the cupola, and another somewhere else. I don't recall the numbers and types of casualties.

o We linked up with another element that afternoon and swept through the village. Most of Charlie company went back to Tay Ninh base camp that night, but a two track ambush was left near the city, with a strong element in reserve in case of contact.

o NOTE: The Battery Commander of "C" 7/11 Arty sent several cases of beer and some steaks to the Charlie Company area that night. No one ate the steaks, and only a few beers were consumed. Everyone was preparing for the nightmare they expected on June 7th. That battle didn't occur until the about. 4 days later at the base of The Mountain. That's the best I can do, Rick. Let me know that you think.

Regards,  
John M

Jan 19, 04

Whoops,

There's egg on my face, as I mistakenly put Capt Lincoln's name on my message where I meant Capt Phillips. The memorial service of which I spoke was for Capt Henry Phillips, not for his successor, Capt Lincoln. In my message I spoke of both and got the names confused. My apologies.

As to your question regarding my service, I was Charlie 26 from about the middle of August 68 until, I think about November. I then went to become the Liaison Officer to Phouc Cung (sp?) district headquarters which was downtown Tay Ninh. I believe Col. Neilson gave me that job as I was about the senior Lt. in the field and I had taught tactics at Benning. While there [the new colonel] took over the battalion. In the states, Nixon got elected and the "Vietnamization Program" went into effect. [The new colonel] came out to the Vietnamese District Headquarters to talk to the MACV

advisors and Tia Tau Mauc (sp?). Mauc (sp?) was the district governor, a major, and it was to him and the MACV people that I was to be the liaison to and to provide support and combined missions with, between 4/23 and the local forces he commanded.

[The colonel] told me about the CRIP platoon idea and wanted me to take it as I had the field time and was already down at the headquarters where the CRIP platoon was to be established. When he told me what the beginning concept was, I told him I didn't want the job. Man, he blew up. I guess he's never had a young lieutenant tell him no before. Told him I'd opt to go back to Charlie Company.

He said I sure as hell was going back to the field but he'd not give me a choice. He put me back to Bravo Co. Capt. Marlow, I think was the CO. Had a platoon with Bravo, don't remember which one, for a few weeks and a couple or so weeks with the mortar platoon. OH! During that time [the Colonel] had a couple more chances at me and he made sure that nothing good would happen to/for me. But that was OK too. What were they going to do, draft me and send me to Viet Nam?

I guess sometime in Jan '69, a provisional company was formed in Headquarters Company to take over the guarding of Nui Ba Den. You had to have only five months left in country or had been wounded twice and they let you finish your tour on the mountain. I was one of the three platoon leaders on top of the mountain until I came home in July'69.

A couple of times, maybe just once, I was with Recon while the platoon leader went on leave or R&R. I was with them strictly on a temporary basis, based out of the Rock Crusher. Would like to know the Recon platoon leader's name. He was a pretty good guy, my impression from only meeting him a few times. He was the one that walked into [the Colonel's] tail rotor and got hurt pretty bad. Another platoon leader kept up with him for a while and I had heard that he was alright, but didn't really know for sure.

Well, you asked the question and I got carried away and told everything you didn't need to know. I remember a few names and have a few pictures.

A Comment: Looking through the messages on this board covering the last few months, it's obvious that we all saw things differently.

I've seen a few accounts of incidents that occurred while I was there and took part in. Just amazed at the differences. Don't know that anyone is wrong or mistaken, just different perspectives, I guess. Makes it all the more interesting.

Respectfully,  
Carl G. Berning

Jan 9, 05

I think Lurch had a hand or arm wound. Have seen the picture of it with me in the photo. He also caught the dud RPG round after we had turned left in front of the temple before we set up.

Johnny C.

June 5, 06

Harvey, -- Yes sir, You are correct.

When you look at After Action Reports and search for "The Battle of Tay Ninh City" your 1968 battle is all the shows up.

*"The Battle for Tay Ninh City II" June 06 1969, was actually fought out on the east edge of the city. The Tomahawk battle line was stretched from the intersection at the Rock Crusher road all the way south to and including the Cao Dai Temple.. June 5th found Alpha Company in a night Laager on the eastern outskirts of the city and just south of the Rock Crusher.*

*RECON was at the Rock Crusher, Bravo Company was at FSB Buell and I think Charlie was at FSB Rawlins. We had a Co. of ARVNS in ambush south of Nui Ba Dinh at the "Banana Grove". They made contact around 4 AM and finally hustled back to Alpha's Laager perimeter before daylight. The reason they didn't pop the ambush was because there were more than 500 VC moving toward the city..*

*RECON came rolling out of the Rock Crusher around 6 AM on the 6th and headed south toward the "Holy See". They triggered the ambush that was set up in the city but blasted their way on thru and set up a skirmish line along the north temple wall. (RPG Alley) In the meantime a handful of Engineers in 5-ton dump trucks came out from TN Base camp and drove right into the kill zone on their way to the Rock Crusher. All of the dump trucks were hit and disabled by RPG's, SKS and AK fire. Alpha company took two tracks into the kill zone in an attempt to get the engineers out of the trucks.*

*I can't say for sure, since my ass was so puckered my memory went blank, but I think the engineers all survived the attack.*

*A couple of the drivers and gunners hit the road running and hid from the gooks along the road. There was an LT in the front truck that was injured but we got him out and dusted off to Tay Ninh.. RECON was pinned down pretty bad and being that it was in the city, were not allowed artillery or mortar support. Also they did not allow air strikes by jet aircraft but a couple of WWII prop jobs did some strafing and bombing runs under the direction of SSgt Doug Conn and I think Cap'n Bob and their FO (name unknown). Around 10 AM with Alpha still trapped on the east side of the city the "Duster" came out from the Rock Crusher to soften up the ambush line. They fired around 1000 rounds of "Bofors" before it was decided to have Alpha try to enter the city.*

*When we started in, we still were getting heavy fire from the village. At that time Col Taylor called Bravo and Charlie out to join the fracas.*

*Since Charlie and Bravo would be coming from the west, and Alpha was on the east, it was decided that Alpha needed to blast around the end of the city and join up with the rest of the battalion. Alpha in herringbone formation fired about 100,000,000, 000 rounds of 50 BMG on their way through the kill zone. It was enough cover fire that no RPG's were fired and the company made it to the west side. Bravo Company came blasting in from the west (Buell across the rice paddies. No one warned them what they were driving into. Bravo arrived but was too far south of the Alpha assault line so they were ordered to turn north and link up with us.*

*When Bravo turned their APC and exposed the sides of the tracks to the enemy, ALL HELL broke loose. Instantly the whole city erupted in gunfire and RPGs.. Bravo instantly lost 5 tracks in a matter of seconds.. The gooks were just waiting on the entire Bat'n to show up so they could inflict as much damage on us as possible..*

*They succeeded that day that night and into the next morning.. The Battalion was online for two days and then the gooks just disappeared. . It took the Battalion*

*almost a month to re-man and repair equipment but they got their revenge over the next few months with operation after operation on the mountain. God Bless all the survivors of the Battle of TNC II*

*Rest in peace our brothers:*

**PANEL 23W**

- Line 084 - Richard Edward Cyran / Bravo Company / 06 JUN 1969**
- Line 085 - Robert Charles Essmann / Bravo Company / 06 JUN 1969**
- Line 086 - Larry Gene Gosch / Bravo Company / 06 JUN 1969**
- Line 087 - John Deogracias Inguillo / Bravo Company / 06 JUN 1969**
- Line 088 - Duane Henry Landwehr / Bravo Company / 06 JUN 1969**
- Line 089 - Carl Donald Lynch / Bravo Company / 06 JUN 1969**
- Line 089 - Dennis James Manson / Bravo Company / 06 JUN 1969**
- Line 090 - Bruce Calvin Maynard / Bravo Company / 06 JUN 1969**
- Line 091 - John David Rhodes III / Bravo Company / 06 JUN 1969**
- Line 093 - Richard Paul Valdez / Bravo Company / 06 JUN 1969**
- Line 118 - James Nelson Clark / Charlie Company / 09 JUN 1969**

**PANEL 22W**

- Line 001 - John Howard Hughes / Charlie Company / 09 JUN 1969**
- Line 004 - Norman Wade Teeter / Charlie Company / 09 JUN 1969**
- Line 005 - Steven William McCloud / Charlie Company / 09 JUN 1969**
- Line 009 - Ronald James Matel / Charlie Company / 09 JUN 1969**

*Rick*

*Jan 27, 08*

*Ron: I have reread your message and the following comes to mind: Minnefield replaced the Captain who was wounded just below the Pagoda in July/August 69; If the Captain that was wounded at The Pagoda was not Starr, and you think that guy replaced Starr, then ---- Then, Captain S. was the Charlie CO during the early June 69 Tay Ninh battles that many of us participated in. Could the Charlie Company CO, at the June 6-9 Tay Ninh "engagements", have been Captain Starr???????*

*What say you, Ron.*

*John M*

*Jan 28, 08Mr. M., -- My field duty ended the night of June 27 1969 and am pretty sure Capt Starr was still there. Terry Godwin most likely has all the answers and his memories of those times are pretty accurate. Hope you and your lovely wife are doing well.*

*Jim H C co 69*

*Jan 28, 08*

*John, I think Capt S. was gone from Charlie Co. before June 9. I remember the captain on that day telling our TC to run our track into the wood line (we were in a blocking position) right into a bunker. Capt. Star would not have given us that kind of order. Besides, that whole contact was so screwed up...Capt. Starr was too good a*

CO to let it get so messed up. I also remember someone once telling me that Capt. Starr got a battlefield commission.. .so he could be listed in 1968 and 1969.

Ron

Jan 28, 2008

John, - Captain S. was not with company C on June 9, 1969; he left the week before. Our new CO was a idiot. Starr would have called in artillery or an airstrike before we entered the wood line of a known enemy stronghold. Our new CO ordered us to charge the wood line online. I think the new CO was killed 3 or 4 weeks later while in a spotter chopper. I don't remember his name.

Terry G.

Jan 28, 08

Jim: -- Thanks loads. Along with answering Cliff's question, you and Ron have solved one question that has haunted me for many a year ---- i.e., the name of the Charlie Company Co during the 6-9 June 69 Tay Ninh City Engagements. The other question that have been ---- who replaced Starr; Why did Starr leave, and what was the name of Starr's replacement, who was wounded just below The Pagoda in July/August 69, and who was replaced by Capt Minnefield. Do either you or Terry have any ideas?????

Thanks JM

Jan 27, 08

Hey Ron: I have reread your message and the following comes to mind: Minnefield replaced the Captain who was wounded just below the Pagoda in July/August 69; If the Captain that was wounded at The Pagoda was not Starr, and you think that guy replaced Starr, then ---- Then, Captain Starr was the Charlie CO during the early June 69 Tay Ninh battles that many of us participated in. Could the Charlie Company CO, at the June 6-9 Tay Ninh "engagements" , have been Captain Starr????????

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Terry G.

Feb 14, 08

*I'm back here again laying in the weeds after spending a few weeks in AZ. I was quickly scanning through the posts over the past month and saw some questions I can maybe help with. Capt Starr came to C Co. on the 5th. of February 69. My letter home says he had 2 years in country. Capt. S was replaced by Capt. N on June 5th. He came from 3/4 Cav. July 1st Capt. N and 2nd Plt LT. were wounded on the mountain. I seem to remember something about a grenade bouncing back off a rock but the old memory is a little fussy. I didn't check the list but want to make sure LT. James T B, 68, second Plt and LT. Gerold E T, 68, Co XO, I don't know if he was a Plt. LT before, are on it.*

Mike H.

Sep 29, 08

*Roy; -- Many in this Group were in country in June 69, and all will tell you that June 1969 was an incredibly month. By many accounts, it was one of the most active months of the war. I was assigned from 7/11 to Charlie on June 6, and was in for a real fun ride from the very minute I arrived. There were several engagements during that month where we received supporting fires from a 7/11 battery at Crook. Late in the month (around 20 June -- but not sure at this point in time), Charlie was involved in a company sized all-night engagement on the Southeast of the banana grove. Multiple batteries of Arty provided support that night. I believe that the battery at Crook also supported, and their line of sight was not masked by the Mountain. In the sweep the following morning, there were many, many enemy KIA between the Company lager and the Mountain. While this was a major engagement (for me, at least), This may not be the engagement your friend referred to. There were many that month, most of them within range of the Crook battery.*

JM

May 9, 2012

Cliff:

*I recall clearly that we used them on the morning of 28 May. We had fought through most of the night before and it looked like the NVA had withdrawn. Just after dawn we came under intense fire. Some NVA squads had crawled up during the night and were almost at the edge of our perimeter behind rice paddy dikes. There was one squad, about 8-10 men on the southern perimeter. They were popping up and firing AKs and RPGs into the perimeter. Someone (I presumed at the time it was you) ordered the two flame tracks from the center of the perimeter to the southern edge to take this enemy element under fire. As the two flame tracks came on line the Soldiers manning that section of the perimeter moved away - no one wanted to be next to one of those tracks if they took an RPG. The drivers threw the transmissions into neutral and gunned the engines to engage the flame contraption's compressor. I remember seeing some sparks coming out of the track's exhaust they had the engines wound up so high. Then the gunners hosed down the rice paddy dike. One stream of flame went right over the top edge of the dike. One NVA stuck his head up as it came by and he was decapitated. That squad was silenced. Later in the*

*afternoon when the 3/4 Cav arrived and the NVA had withdrawn we walked out and found all of that squad behind the dike. They were all dead - most if not all as a result of the flame.*

*The only other time I recall them in the field was when we had that battle east of Go Da Ha in late July.*

*Someone (you?) ordered the flame tracks forward. Lt. Altman, who had been reassigned to Flame from Co. B, was riding prone atop one of the flame tracks and caught a bullet behind his knee that went up his leg. I think it was one of those fabled "million dollar wounds" that sent him to Japan.*

*Butch Sincock*

\* \* \* \* \*

### **NEW CAMPAIGN : 9 June 1969 – 31 October 1969**

From 25<sup>th</sup> Inf Division AAR & Lessons Learned for the period:

With the departure of enemy main force units from SAIGON area, 25th Infantry Division in June committed approximately a third of its combat forces to continued defense of SAIGON and the remainder to the west and northwest of the Division TAOI. Divisional units that remained near SAIGON did so as a part of the Capitol Military District, (later re-designated Capital Military Assistance Command) as a provisional Command under II Field Forces to help defend SAIGON, or as elements under division control, maneuvering in west outskirts of the city.

Extensive and wide ranging Battalion-sized search and destroy and reconnaissance in force operations were conducted throughout the south TAOI from ORIENTAL RIVER on the south and west of the TAY NINH - BAU CO - DAU TIENG axis on the north, and the SAIGON RIVER - THI TINH RIVER axis on the east. These ops were characterized by coordinated daylight cross country sweeps seeking enemy base camps and supply caches, village searches coordinated with GVN officials, and airmobile assaults against targets of opportunity. At night the Division employed Platoon-size ambushes along canals, rivers, roads, trails and other likely routes of enemy movement. In addition, night roving Platoon-size units patrolled suspected areas of enemy activity. On an average day in June-July, 50% of combat forces were employed during the day and 50% at night.

In addition to search and destroy Ops, 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division secured road communications throughout its south TAOI, and maintained 24-hr security on main supply routes in the TAOI. These were Rte 1 from SAIGON to CU CHI to GO DA HAU, Rte 22 from GO DA HA to TAY NINH City, Rte 4 from TAY NINH CITY to BAU CO, Rtes 13-26-239 from TAY NINH City to DAU TIENG and Rte 8A from CU CHI to PHU CONG (the CU CHI-LONG BINH MSR). The only part of the TAOI that did not enter in force during June -July was the jangled and sparsely populated WAR ZONE C areas north of the TAY NINH - BAU CO - DAU TIENG axis. This area was subject, though, to surveillance both aerial and LRRPs, and squad and platoon-size

units. Extensive B-52 and TAC AIR strikes were placed throughout WAR ZONE C on enemy bases, supply concentrations and other targets of opportunity. Despite 25<sup>th</sup> Division's all-out efforts during June and July, level of contact dropped to a point where scattered and infrequent skirmishes with local force Plt-size units became the norm. Considerable success was realized however, in finding weapons, ammo and supply caches. The only consistent contact established by 25<sup>th</sup> Division units occurred the last two weeks of July when 3rd Bde, 101st Air Cav Division (OPCON to 25th Inf Division) engaged 2nd Bn 275th VC Regiment along an axis from TRANG BANG (XT489194) to TRUNG LAP (XT585199). TAY NINH Base was hit by similar attacks as DAU TIENG Base during the month. Rocket attacks were made on the 6th, 12th, 13th, and 22nd resulting in one US killed and 11 wounded.

Info From Official Records: SPECIAL EQUIPMENT AND TECHNIQUES. a.

"Super Claymore". A 15 pound electrically detonated shaped charge pointed in the direction of the enemy with a roll of barbed wire placed in front of the shaped charge. The roll of wire has a block of C4 explosive in the center, fused with a non-electric blasting cap, and connected to the shaped charge with detonating cord. Upon ignition, the C4 ruptures the rolled wire as the shaped charge blows the disintegrating mass in the direction of the enemy. Thirty of these devices were positioned around FSB Crook and used with the devastating effect on enemy assault troops.

b. Fougasse. Eight 55 gal drums of Fougasse [an improvised flame mine containing thickened gasoline] were positioned around the base, but the enemy troops took great care in avoiding the ground in front of these devices.

c. Six of the eight M-60 MGs belonging to the arty battery were placed on the bunker line and manned by the rifle company. This doubled the number of machineguns firing from the bunker line.

d. The rifle company 1st Sgt maintained a PLL for small arms and established a repair point in a bunker. Weapons that malfunctioned were immediately brought to this point for on-site repair.

e. Three smudge pots were kept at each perimeter bunker, allowing the outline of the camp to be marked throughout the night.

f. This Bn had adopted a policy of rotating rifle companies in and out of the FSB at two to three week intervals. This periodic change increased the morale and alertness of the troops and caused them to view their new surroundings with a critical eye. Constant

improvements were made in defenses and internal arrangements of the base, in a spirit of competition between the companies.

g. A ready reaction force was composed of support personnel and organized into three squads with an AN/PRC-25 radio and M-60 each. They were rehearsed to react as squads, reinforcing designated sectors, or to react as an entire platoon to a major threat from any direction.

h. The battalion maintained a forward aid station at FSB Crook, manned by the Bn Surgeon and three senior aid men from Bn Medical Plt. Thus they had the capacity to perform life saving surgery in the event that the enemy anti-aircraft fire would delay medical evacuation. There were landing zones inside and outside the perimeter. MEDEVAC was performed at 0530 hours each morning from the interior landing zone. Gunships provided cover for the MEDEVAC helicopters.

i. Ammo was pre-stocked in 3 main ammo supply points and in 18 small supply points positioned behind the fighting bunkers. This precluded any heavy loss of ammo from enemy fire and reduced the amount of time and exposure of personnel in re-supplying the fighting bunkers.

\* \* \* \* \*

Killed in Action during these following weeks include:

**11 June, Richard M. Randolph, HHC**  
**19 June, David A. Madden, Bravo Company**  
**20 June, Dale R. Pavey, C Company**

From MACV June 69 Monthly summary:

On the night of June 26-27, beginning around at 1730, an observation helo drew enemy small arms fire from an unknown- size enemy force 5 mi NW Tay Ninh City and directed arty onto the enemy location, followed by a sweep of 1<sup>st</sup> Bde, 25<sup>th</sup> Division mech infantry. 23 enemy dead were found with no US casualties.

Next morning [June 27] at 0845, that mech Inf Bn [4<sup>th</sup>/23<sup>rd</sup> ? – Bn not specified ed.] engaged with all organic wpns an unknown size enemy force 6 mi NE Tay Ninh City. Arty, helo gunships, and Tac Air were also directed on the enemy location. Contact was broken at 1430 when the enemy the enemy withdrew, leaving behind 62 dead, 23 AK-47s and 2 crew served wpns. US losses were one KIA and nine WIA. **Killed this day were Arthur R. Davis, B Co, and James D. Zebert , A Co,**

On 29 June, a 1<sup>st</sup> Bde 25<sup>th</sup> Division element found 11 more enemy bodies 3 mi NW of Tay Ninh City, apparently killed by the preceding days' arty fire. One destroyed AK-47 was with the bodies.

\* \* \* \* \*

From June, 1969 MACV Monthly Summary: Between 1 and 14 June, 1968, a total 8539 enemy were killed country-wide, and 145 B-52 strikes were delivered in III CTZ.. Throughout June, the Tay Ninh Base Camp took daily fire from mortars, rockets, and recoilless rifles.

\* \* \* \* \*

July saw a limited number of contacts with the enemy, who had been defeated during his May offensive, and was now generally avoiding major contact throughout the TAOI. On the afternoon of 8 July, C/1/27 Inf found a large cache vic XT799124 containing 238 - 60mm rds, 18 - 82mm rds, 4 boxes medical supplies, and other assorted SA ammo.

In early July, Intel reported an imminent major attack. The 5<sup>th</sup> NVA and 9<sup>th</sup> VC Division bases were both in the province, probably for the first time.

**On 1 July, 1969 Cordell Grove of HHC was killed in action.**

On 16 Jul, A Btry/7/11 Arty moved from FSB (illegible) to Dau Tieng, and C/7/11 from Dau Tieng to FSB Wood. These moves maintained support for the fast-moving **4 Bn, 23d Inf (Mech)** as they shifted their RIF from the Crescent to Boi Loi Woods.

**17 July saw Julio Quinones of Recon Platoon killed in action.**

By 20 July, enemy attack was again thought imminent. 2/27<sup>th</sup> Infantry was sent to join 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade with 1/5<sup>th</sup> Infantry (Mech), **4<sup>th</sup> Bn (Mech) 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry**, 3/22<sup>nd</sup> Infantry, and 2/34<sup>th</sup> Armor. FSBs were set around the city. At the same time, similar defenses were set around Dau Tieng Base, 25 km to the east. These pre-emptive actions served to delay the expected offensive. There were 253 B-52 missions against suspected base camps, supply caches, and assembly areas. Later reports confirmed these strikes destroyed two enemy battalions in Straight Edge Woods and one north of Nui Ba Den.

On 26 July the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division in Long an Province was placed OPCON 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division.

On 27 July, 3/22 and **4<sup>th</sup> Bn (Mech), 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry** were moved to strike the enemy to deny him initiative. During this quarter, Division Artillery fired 256 thousand rds, including 53 thousand 155mm and 10 thousand 8 inch.

In general, contact with main force units throughout the 25th Inf Div's TAOI diminished in Jun and Jul. With his offensive on SAIGON and threatened artillery assaults on the Capital defeated, the enemy demonstrated little willingness to fight. Rather, in Jun his main force units remaining outside SAIGON broke contact, dispersed and exfiltrated west to Cambodia and northwest into WAR ZONE C.

In executing this pull back, the enemy avoided contact and, when engaged, was quick to disperse into smaller groups and disengage as quickly as possible. Intel clearly indicated the enemy's intent to withdraw depleted main force units to traditional sanctuaries for replacements, resupply and retraining.

The enemy mission had been to "liberate" the country section by section and inflict heavy casualties – especially on 25<sup>th</sup> Div. Their forces were believed to include 5<sup>th</sup> NVA div, 9<sup>th</sup> VC Div, 101<sup>st</sup> Regt, 174<sup>th</sup> Regt, D14 Local Force Bn, and D16 Local Force Bn.

August saw 25th Division continuing Phase III of Operation Toan Thang. 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade operated in Tay Ninh Province with 5 Battalions and was responsible for Highways 22 and 26, combined operations with ARVN around Tay Ninh City, and area coverage around Nui Ba Den. Battalions of 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade included 4<sup>th</sup> Bn/9<sup>th</sup> Inf, 3<sup>rd</sup> Bn/22<sup>nd</sup> Inf, 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn/22<sup>nd</sup> Inf (Mech), **4<sup>th</sup> Bn/23<sup>rd</sup> Inf (Mech)**, 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn/34<sup>th</sup> Armor, and in support 7<sup>th</sup> Bn/11<sup>th</sup> Artillery and Btry A/2<sup>nd</sup> Bn/77<sup>th</sup> Artillery.

On 2 August , **Co A 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry (Mech)** doing a reconnaissance on the southern foot of Nui Ba Den engaged three NVA with organic weapons and artillery, killing all three.

On 3 August, a night patrol from **Bravo Company 4/23<sup>rd</sup> (Mech)** 4 km southeast of Nui Ba Den (XT315565) killed eight NVA with automatic weapons, helo gunships, artillery, and Air Force gunship fire.

On 4 August, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 14th Infantry located a large munitions cache vic XS645994 in a canal. A search uncovered 17 - 107mm rockets, 16 - 75mm RR rds, 22 CHICOM antii-tank mines, and 56 lbs CHICOM TNT.

On 5 August, **Co B 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry (Mech)** recon'd 1 km east of Nui Ba Den (XT308572) and received mortar fire, wounding two US troops. **Company B** returned fire including helo gunships and arty, killing 5 NVA.

Again on 7 August, **Company B** killed four NVA in an engagement beginning 1440 hrs, supported by helo gunships, CS riot control agent, and TAC AIR. Another cache was found of 139 - 75mm RR rds.

On 8 August, **Companies B and C, 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry (Mech)** combined with 2 RF companies to support a 6 man recovery team to locate and recover a body of US soldier killed 12 July in an operation of 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion 22<sup>nd</sup> Infantry. The recovery was without incident other than sniper fire. Two tracks became mired, and came under sniper fire that was suppressed by minimum, 40 mm "Duster" fire, direct 8" howitzer and TAC AIR dropping napalm, killing nine enemy.

On 17 August, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion 14<sup>th</sup> Infantry, vic XT743192, found three mounds approx two feet high. A probe into them uprooted 107 RPG-2 rounds, 140 - 82mm rds, 23 - 75mm RR rds, 50 - 5ft piece CHICOM Bangalore sections 29 CHICOM antitank mines, 500 rounds .51cal. ammo, 300 quarter-pound blocks of CHICOM TNT, and 28,500 rds 7.62 ammo.

On 20 August, 3 km northeast of Nui Ba Den, **Bravo Co. 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion 23<sup>rd</sup> Inf (Mech)** received RPG fire in a night defensive position, and engaged the enemy killing 3 NVA. Next day in same position, they received 82 mm mortar, small arms, and auto weapons fire from an estimated NVA Company at 0159 hrs, followed by a ground assault. Initial incoming fire wounded 6 US troops and slightly damaged 2 APCs. Artillery, Night Hawk Helicopter, and Air Force gunship fire was called in. A sweep of the battlefield next morning found 41 NVA killed and took 3 prisoners. Interrogation of prisoners revealed the enemy unit was COSVN Artillery and possible 88<sup>th</sup> NVA Regiment. Unit.

The final week of August produced 107 mm rocket attacks, and a night sapper probe on the bunker line along with small arms fire.

Helo gunships strafed an est NVA squad, killing one.

First week of September saw another rocket attack on Tay Ninh Base, wounding one US soldier. Otherwise, September produced no significant contacts, only small-unit actions against the US. The month's largest cache was found on 27 September when elements of 3/49th ARVN Regiment, supporting 2nd Brigade 25<sup>th</sup> Division, located 104 – 75mm RR rds, 282 - 60mm rds, 281 – 82mm rds, three cases CHICOM grenades, 21 anti-tank mines and three cases AK ammo. For 1<sup>st</sup> Bde, But during the first two weeks of September the enemy made an effort to assemble troops in the banana grove at the base. [Ed – the AAR goes on to detail several apparently “insignificant” contacts.]

On 3 September, 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn/34<sup>th</sup> Armor engaged enemy on slopes of Nui Ba Den killing 18 at 1320 hrs.. Same day, other elements 2<sup>nd</sup>/34<sup>th</sup> Armor at PB ROCK CRUSHER engaged the enemy at 1525 hours killing three at the same location with “Duster” fire.

Another September 5 sighting at 1600 in the same location resulted in additional six enemy killed from 4.2” mortars and 90mm tank guns. Several more attacks and responses ensued. A sweep of enemy location found 17 enemy killed.

Same day, **Charlie Company 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry (Mech)** approached Nui Ba Den from the southwest and rec'd enemy 82 mortar fire with no casualties. **Charlie Co** wheeled west toward mortar positions and at 0945 hrs engaged and estimated enemy Company at XT 292563. Supported by CS riot agent, mortar, artillery and TAC AIR support resulted in 30 enemy killed, with one US KIA by small arms fire. [Apparently not from 4<sup>th</sup> 23<sup>rd</sup>. – ed]

Again **on September 11** in the area of the heavily forested Banana Groves (XT2999569) **Alpha Company 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Mech) 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry** engaged an estimated enemy battalion who returned fire with mall arms, auto weapons, mortars. 2669 rounds of US Artillery were called in on enemy positions, along with a TAC AIR drop of CS, bombs, helo gunship fire, and direct 8” howitzer fire. Smoke screened a sweep of the area which found 47 enemy killed & one prisoner. Five [?-ed] US were KIA and four ARVNs WIA. **Lt Dennis R Metz, Alpha Co, and Michael A. Montellano of HHC were KIA this day.**

Next day, September 12, **Company A** same org, again made contact at this location and killed 5 more NVA by artillery.

On 13 September, **Company A** continued along with 7<sup>th</sup> ARVN Arbn Bn into area XT289564 and at 1030 hrs engaged well-entrenched enemy with all weapons including CS, helo gunships, arty, and TAC AIR resulting in four enemy killed. A sharp engagement followed at 1335 hrs with heavy enemy small arms, auto weapons, RPG, mortars incoming. **Company A** again responded fully and an additional 8 enemy were killed, with no further US casualties.

**On 16 September, 1969 James L Seldon of Charlie Company was KIA.**

Early on 6 October, **Scout Plt, 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion 23<sup>rd</sup> Inf (Mech)** engaged an unknown size enemy force with small arms, auto weapons, helo gunships, and artillery, resulting in 17 NVA killed . Later, around 0915 the same platoon engaged an estimated 20 additional enemy, killing two more. Carey D. Miller, A Co, was killed in action this day.

On 11 October, Co **A/4<sup>th</sup> Bn/23<sup>rd</sup> Inf (M)** discovered a cave on E side of the mountain (XT297577) concealing a cache of arms and ammunition, map overlays of the signal position atop the mountain, and other bases around the region.

\* \* \* \* \*

From 25<sup>th</sup> D May 5, 2011

Doug Rogers:

Welcome aboard. My name is John Mohler. I led the FO team in Charlie Company during the 69-70 period. My primary track was the Command track. You mention 2nd platoon, 23 track in March 1970. Do you happen to recall SGT Craig Emery. He was the driver of 23 track that was KIA on 15 March 1970 at the eastern side of The Mountain????????

Or, do you recall SFC Terry Trobrough ---- Platoon Sgt of 3rd platoon?????? Or Bobby Kammerer of the 3rd platoon?

John M.

May 5, 2011

Doug Rogers:

Welcome aboard. My name is John Mohler. I led the FO team in Charlie Company during the 69-70 period. My primary track was the Command track. You mention 2nd platoon, 23 track in March 1970. Do you happen to recall SGT Craig Emery. He was the driver of 23 track that was KIA on 15 March 1970 at the eastern side of The Mountain????????

Or, do you recall SFC Terry Trobrough ---- Platoon Sgt of 3rd platoon?????? Or Bobby Kammerer of the 3rd platoon? John M.

\* \* \* \* \*

Division Quarterly report summary:

During the previous reporting quarter, the 25<sup>th</sup> Inf Division prevented enemy forces operating in Tay Ninh and Hau Nghia provinces from achieving the goals they had outlined for the Summer Campaign, 1969. Those plans were to inflict heavy losses on US and GVN forces, disrupt pacification, and strengthen the Communist infrastructure in hopes of influencing the Paris Peace Talks and cast doubt on GVN's viability. [Including 3487 enemy killed.]

The NLF announced a Provincial Government, attempted to seized Tay Ninh City and the Cao Dai Temple, and announced the intention the city the seat of the



NLF Government. The Division also continued to upgrade ARVN/RF/PF forces with an increased emphasis on combined operations.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade preempted all attempts to initiate an offensive on Tay Ninh City, wore down enemy units at and around Nui Ba Den and S-SW of the City, invaded his areas in Boi Loi Woods while Naval Patrols began on the Vam Co Dung R to restrict enemy supplies into Tay Ninh from Cambodia...

\* \* \* \* \*

Aug 28, 03

Hey Rick,-- *The following is an extract from an "After Action Report" from the battle for Tay Ninh June-August 69'. Just like I remember it. I had forgotten that FB Crook and Washington had been hit on June 6-7. Remarkably though, they had very few casualties. Seems like most of the casualties were sustained by the blocking forces as the NVA were retreating back to the mountain.*

*"After the 1969 battle of Tay Ninh, the 88th NVA Regiment escaped to caves that honeycombed the flanks of Nui Ba Den. There they hoped to find solace, several weeks to regroup, resupply, and recover. Essential to this retreat, however, was the need for incoming supplies. Fresh enemy soldiers had to get in the mountain, supplies had to be brought in, patrols had to be sent out. What remained of the 88th Regiment depended completely on this traffic.*

*"Men of the **4th Battalion (Mech), 23rd Infantry**, resolved to surround the mountain and barricade the beleaguered enemy. With armored personnel; carriers and tanks from the 2nd Battalion, 34th Armor, the Tomahawks moved into position.*

*"On 27 June 1969 the men of Charlie Company, 4th Battalion, 23rd Infantry were in a night defensive position within the shadow of the mountain. In the early morning hours the enemy came from his cave 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.*

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

*"Two small contacts the following day eliminated additional enemy.*

*"Two days later the remainder of the decimated battalion attempted to flee the mountain again. It proved a futile attempt. The counter attack by the 4th Battalion, 23rd Infantry and the 2nd Battalion, 34th Armor cost the enemy additional lives.*

*"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 equipment and men. It would be months before these units could become effective fighting forces again.*

*"Nui Ba Den: On the summit of this 3,200-foot granite mountain jutting up from the jungle floor, a small company of infantrymen guards a critical signal relay, the heart of the division's communication system.*

*Operating the high frequency and multiple channel radio, the signalmen on the mountain work this lonely position retransmitting vital tactical communications that connect far-flung units with their division command and support.*

*“Throughout July and August 1969, the enemy remained quiet around the foot of the mountain. Contact was sporadic as squads and enemy recon patrols made an occasional effort to move. But during the first two weeks of September, the enemy made an effort to assemble troops in the banana grove at the base of the mountain.*

*On a morning patrol of the area, soldiers of the 4th Battalion (Mech), 23rd Infantry, and elements of the 688th Vietnamese Regional Forces Company were attacked by mortar and rocket propelled grenade fire. Through the morning and into the early afternoon, the Tomahawks attacked through the banana grove in pursuit of the fleeing enemy company. The NVA scrambled for cover on the mountain. The 2nd Battalion, 34th Armor moved in. Swinging their main guns around, the tankers began to fire on likely enemy hiding positions. Mortar, .50 caliber machine gun and 90mm cannon fire poured onto the enemy positions.*

*“Five days later, the Tomahawks again engaged the enemy attempting to rally in the banana grove, and again, the allied soldiers gave chase. At one point, self-propelled artillery rolled up to the foot of the mountain and fired into the caves where the frustrated enemy was hiding. In the period of seven days, the 1st Brigade kept great pressure on the enemy and once again asserted its control over the terrain”*

- - -

*Damn, we did good!!!!!! This is what makes me feel all tingly inside, ha, ha. If only I just hadn't been so damn scared then, I might have actually enjoyed it, ha, ha. I had often wondered who else was out there doing what we were doing. Now I got a whole lot more understanding of what we were doing. This stuff is great !!!! Ps. A hey to Ray H. too.....*

*Joe*

*August 30, 2003*

*Hey Joe.....*

*I remember that... Like you' it's nice to know the bigger picture...*

*Lawrence H.*

*Co B 4th/23<sup>rd</sup> Feb 69 - Mar 70*

*Oct 5, 03 --*

*“October 5, 1969*

*“Recon Platoon of Headquarters Company 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Regiment 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division.*

*“Recon was in a night defensive position at the Rock Crusher [Oct 5-6, 69?]. The platoon leader LT. Donnie Shelton was on R&R.*

*Early evening Platoon Sergeant Douglas Conn attempted to take a shower but found the first section showers inoperable, he proceeded to the second section showers. While showering a young soldier came into the shower area and spoke to Conn. The young soldier told Conn he had just been transferred from Flame into Recon but was nervous and disturbed that his MOS wasn't infantry (54D20). He asked if Conn would have him transferred to the 35 track which was the platoon*

sergeants track. Conn told him to settle down and as soon as there was an opening on his track he would bring him on. Around 8PM Conn received a situation report from a second section track. They reported observing movement approx. 200 yards up on the mountain. They observed individuals jumping across an opening between two large boulders. The tracks engaged the enemy forces and attempted to time they're firing to the troops jumping across the opening. It was difficult to shoot these individuals because you could only see them for a few seconds. Later on in the evening a little bear gunship came on station to assist with rocket fire. The little bear expended all of its ordnance and returned to Tay Ninh base camp. Artillery from Tay Ninh and other areas was called in on the area of the enemy. Later on and in the early hours of the 6<sup>th</sup> of October SSG Conn called in a spooky C130 gun ship. This was one of the only times the platoon had seen a spooky on station as a support element for the platoon. The Spooky was like watching toothpaste coming out of an airplane. We could only see every 5th round because of the tracers but that was like a continuous stream of red. Around 6:30 am the fighting slowed down. Conn received orders to take a small group up the mountain for a body count. The orders included a message to expedite the search because they still needed to sweep and secure highway 26. Conn took a group of 6 or 8 recon members up to the area of contact. Approximately half way to the area they stopped for a break and took some pictures. (See pictures taken from up on the mountain) Just as the Recon group approached the area Conn heard the enemy forces under them in the rock caves. Conn believing they were in serious jeopardy of being ambushed turned the group around and started moving down the mountain. While departing the enemy forces started moving toward the group. Conn ordered the group to pop smoke and move below the smoke. Conn informed the second section of tracks to shoot above the smoke. The tracks brought suppressive fire above smoke and the team returned without any injuries. (See picture of the group moving down the mountain with the smoke above).

There is another picture of the young soldier firing from the tracks that spoke to Conn in the shower. Battalion was pressuring Conn to get down the mountain and clear & secure the convoy and HWY 26. Conn gathered up the Recon Platoon and proceeded to Hwy 26. Since the convoy was on the way Conn ordered the tracks to run the road and proceed directly to their outpost locations.

Conn was ordered to report to Rawlins to see the Battalion Commander to brief him on the night's activities. While reporting Conn was standing just outside the TOC. The RTO from inside the TOC interrupted the discussion to inform Conn his platoon had just called for a dust off.

Conn immediately returned to the command track to proceed to the dust off coordinates. Arriving in just a few minutes Conn found Cary Miller on the ground with his feet elevated and covered to the neck with a blanket. Conn asked Miller how are you doing? Miller said I'm OK sarge. Conn proceeded into the track to find Bordonali on the seats with Doc Sherron holding a tunicate on his leg. Doc asked Conn to hold the tunicate (a 50 caliber shell on a helmet band) to allow Doc to administer medications. Wondering about the dust off Conn radioed the 35 track for a status report. Sgt. Garcia told him it was coming from Dau Tieng and was late. Conn then went out of the track to check on Miller and he had passed away. Conn went to the 35 track to encourage the dust off to move it along. The dust off arrived Conn popped smoke and other members loaded Bordinalli & Miller into the

helicopter. Bordonali had his leg blown off and Miller was killed. The track had evidence of a fragmentary explosion just to the driver's side behind the TC hatch. The TC hatch had evidence of round fragments into the hatch. Miller was the soldier that spoke to Conn in the shower the night before. "

Miller was the only soldier killed while Conn was Platoon Sergeant.  
The National Archive Center records indicate the following.

(attached)

Page 34 & 35 of the quarterly Operational Report-Lessons Learned:

The only significant ground activity in the 1<sup>st</sup> brigade area occurred at the southern base of Nui Ba Den mountain (XT268564) in the early morning hours of 6 October. The **Scout Platoon, 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion (mechanized) 23rd Infantry**. Engaged an unknown sized enemy force with small arms, automatic weapons, helicopter fire teams and artillery, resulting in 17 NVA killed. Not far from this contact at 0915 hours, the Scout Platoon engaged an estimated 20 enemy in the dense banana groves at the foot of the mountain and accounted for two more bodies.

Doug

[Ed note – following correspondence began with regard to possible early 1970 action, but in retrospect it may be applicable to above actions involving “banana grove” from late June 1969 as John M notes in his 3rd message.]

\* \* \* \* \*

Feb 16, 09

Darrell: -- My question is merely out of continued interest for what occurred that day. What Company was Mr. G. with?????? I can relate the following memories of that day:

-During the fight on 15 March, Charlie company was shifted to the left (as you face the Mountain).

-I think Alpha or HQ moved in to our right (can't be sure after all these years).

There were also two flame tracks;

-When Charlie was shifted to the left, we still had a two man FO team out in front - stranded and surrounded. A 2nd LT and Sp 4 Ross , both slightly wounded;

-While we searching for them, they were joined by a couple of guys from the unit that moved into our right -- and to their immediate front;

-One of those guys became KIA while he was with or near the two-man FO team. They/we never learned his name.

-We think that the guy was with the unit that moved in on the right of Charlie, with two flame tracks Could Mr. Garcia have been with that unit to the right of Charlie????? ???? If my question is out of line, please let me know.

John M.

Feb 16, 09

Doug: - The flame tracks did not join Charlie co. They joined the unit that moved in on our right. We had to get them to stop firing in order that we could get to the FO

team and the two or three other guys that joined them (looks like they were from Alpha). As we were searching for them, we were on radio contact with them. We located them from one of their communications. I will try to paraphrase that radio traffic from Ross C. --- "We are surrounded by bad guys. We are right in front of the flame tracks, and they are firing on us. Everything around us is on fire. Stop those "frigging" guys are we're "frigging" dead".

We were able to stop the "flamers" just in time. That entire scene would make a great movie. As a matter of fact, the last time I saw Ross in Orlando about 4 years ago, the one thing he remembered most vividly was looking at this bizarre scene, and someone saying -- "just like in the movies". Stay well.

JM

Feb 16, 09

Flame was difficult to work with just because it took so long to get someplace then to mix the fuel in the deuce ½ then load the tracks then start burning. Every bad guy in the area knew what they were, and shot at them. They had this funny looking spout coming out of the TC hatch. It must have been planned for many hours prior to them being used. With Alpha Company and Charlie CO. They were on line at Rawlins just on the right side of the entrance coming in.

Doug

Feb 16, 09

JM- Was this at night or day. Were you using an 8" gun firing on the mountain? Recon was securing the 8 " gun

Doug

Feb 16, 09

Doug: To the best of my recollection, the "contact" began approximately late morning with Charlie company on a sweep on the west side of the Mountain (Dau Tieng side; where the big boulders were; just below the saddle at the base of Nui Cau). Charlie sent out two platoons to sweep, with one platoon in reserve. I went with the left platoon; Ross Cicarello and the new 2LT went with the right platoon. We both started to receive fire from both the Mountain and in the grass around us. The CO (Capt., Terry O'Hara) ordered both platoons back, and called Battalion. After a short while, LTC Coggins ordered additional support. That happened shortly after noon. The activity really ramped up about mid afternoon with most of the Battalion involved and on line. We also received 4 dusters. Two on each flank. As I recall, we all pulled back from the Mountain that night, formed a Battalion perimeter; and sent out ambush patrols.

However, Brigade also got involved near the end of the first day. Two companies of leg infantry (3/22) were inserted by helo on the top of the saddle between Nui Cau and Nui Ba Den either late that afternoon of day one or the following morning (can't recall at this point). This was a really bad move for "The Legs". That is another story.

I do not recall any 8 inchers being moved up, but that is possible. I just don't remember that. I doubt that any direct fire arty was used to our front the next two

days, because the 3/22 was working their way down the Mountain, trying to sweep the bad guys to us (didn't work so well). My recollection of Day 1 has been somewhat clouded because of a slight injury I received, but -- due to the nursing skills of John Hyatt, I was able to drink Pussers [a rare and exotic brand of rum – ed} yet another day.

Another reason I do not believe that any direct fire arty (especially 8 inchers) was used in our sector is the following --- On day three, what was left of the two companies of the 3/22 had reached the bottom of the Mountain -- out of food, water and ammo. There was about 150 yards of open ground between them and the elephant grass (where we were). The participating line companies (including Charlie) were asked for volunteers to run the tracks up beyond the elephant grass; turn off engines about 50 yards from the bottom of the Mountain -- out in the open --- in very reachable range of RPGs and 51 cal.; ordered not to fire any weapons in the direction of the mountain; and wait for the survivors of the 3/22 to run out to us.

You could get some real stories about this event from Ross Cicarello, John Hyatt, Bobby Kammerer, CSM Terry Trobough, and Keith "Doc" Martin.

At the end of day three; a group of triple deuce came up from Hunter to provide some relief, and some of us were sent down to Hunter to fill their slots. Hunter got hit on the third night.

Can't remember much more. Other probably have more succinct memories of those events. J

JM

Feb 17, 09 –

This either happened twice or Recon was on the far western edge. I say this and don't remember any dates. But the time we secured the 8" gun it was on the eastern side. Nui Cau was on the western side. Recon arrived almost at dusk (must have been day 2) we picked up the legs and headed home that night. Back to the rock crusher. The rock crusher burned in November 69 so it couldn't have been March 70. Maybe this happened twice, I don't know..... Could you imagine putting people on top and walking down. Now that I write this I think it wasn't legs it was one of our own companies.

Doug

Feb 17, 09

Doug:

Let me make one correction on my earlier email. The 15-17 March 1970 action took place on the Eastern side of the Mountain -- not western. On the Dau Tieng side, not Tay Ninh base camp side.

Regarding 8 inchers being brought up for directing fire --- I do recall one such event. But it seems to have occurred sometime after June 1969 (there was a lot of "activity" between early June and September), and on the south side of the mountain --- between Rawlins and The Mountain. It was either directly in front of the "Banana Grove", which was to the left of the Pagoda --- or, it was to the right of the Pagoda and directly in front of the giant dry stream bed/waterfall that came directly down the Mountain from top to bottom.

*I don't recall the designation of the 8" battery (3/13, ???? ). The 1/8 and 7/11 were 105's, and 2/32 were 175s -- I think. Anyway, during that event, I was with Charlie. As I recall, we just pulled back into a perimeter, and those folks with the 8" platoon (2 guns), their FO team, and their security, did all of the work. I can't recall what we did afterwards. Must be old age. Our Arty team at the time consisted of me and 2LT John Knox. We just hung around and drank c-ration coffee --- I think.*

*John M*

*Mar 17, 09*

*This either happened twice or Recon was on the far western edge. I say this and don't remember any dates. But the time we secured the 8" gun it was on the eastern side. Nui Cau was on the western side. Recon arrived almost at dusk (must have been day 2) we picked up the legs [ground infantry – ed.] and headed home that night. Back to the rock crusher. The rock crusher burned in November 69 so it couldn't have been March 70. Maybe this happened twice, I don't know..... Could you imagine putting people on top and walking down. Now that I write this I think it wasn't legs it was one of our own company's.*

*Doug*

*Feb 17, 09*

*Cliff -- An appropriate description of the attitude toward FO teams --- "Lamentably Expendable". Also, as "heretics" who lived well outside the Firing Battery, and with those dirty line companies.*

*JM*

*Feb 17, 09*

*John -- Sorry about getting back in the game late. I think on that day we had one of zippo tracks on either side of us. If I remember right, we were on your right. I know that the zippo tracks die a fair job of roasting bananas. Also, I don't remember any 8 inch guns, but I remember the 175 and the smaller guns firing. Garcia (if I remember right) drove track 1/3 for A Co. I know that we couldn't figure out why he was not moving when we pulled back, but unfortunately we found out when we got to him. Also, there was many more BS-V issued for that adventure.*

*Darrell*

*October 4*

*Neil, -- You're right about doing the right and wrong things and surviving in spite of it all..*

*Like I said, I think we are fated from birth and it's not in our control..*

*I witnessed some amazing instances over there myself.. We had an Amerind (Cherokee or Apache one) in the Company that we just called "Chief". We got pinned down in a firefight one day and were behind a paddy dike and the gooks were dug in with covered foxholes.. They were kicking our butts.. Anyhow,, Chief and his best friend were beside each other in front of one foxhole and his buddy got hit and killed.. Chief screamed and jumped up in a hail of gun fire and ran straight to that bunker and jumped on the roof of the foxhole.. We all had to stop firing.. As soon as an AK barrel popped through that gun slit, Chief would reach down and grab the barrel and*

*jerk the surprised NVA right through the hole.. It was scary, hilarious and gruesome all at the same time, to see that surprised "gook" hanging on the end of his gun while Chief dispatched him to the great Buddha.. Not once but three times he did that.. Hell, I'm sitting here shaking my head in disbelief as I write this all down.. I know it was adrenalin that made him do it but man it was an awesome sight.. Chief said it was weird to get his Bronze Star for doing something really stupid..*

*About the body wearing out.. I had a motorcycle wreck about 25 years ago with compound fractured leg and broken ribs so I have been on Arthritis medicine ever since.. This helps the tennis elbow and yes the ice and heat help a lot too.. I wasn't telling any of this for sympathy I was just pointing out that we are now at THAT age..*

*You know, if we'd stayed in, we could retire from the service now with well over 30 years of service.. I bet that would be a good pension.*

*.Later bro, Rick*

\* \* \* \* \*

Killed in action the remainder of calendar year 1969 were:

**6 October, Carey Miller, HHC**

**13 October, Lt. Thomas A. Fritzer, of Alpha Company**

**17 October, Christopher S. Struwe of Charlie Co**

**2 November, Moises R. Herrera, Charlie Co.**

\* \* \* \* \*

[Lest we forget that some Tomahawks wore Artillery brass:]

Dec 6, 2011

Having been assigned to C/7/11 during the period 1/7/69 to 5/25/70, and attached to C/4/23 for the period 6/6/69 to 5/15/70 – I do recall at least one of the officers you have listed in your email below. When I arrived in Charlie Company on the morning of 6 June 1969, 2LT John Knox was just returning from R&R and was Charlie company FO. June 6<sup>th</sup> of 69 was a rude awakening and learning experience for both of us. I joined his FO team as the Recon Sgt.. John Knox was, in my humble opinion, the finest example of an Arty FO professional with whom I ever served. While I was under the impression that I was an Arty genius prior to my 4/23 assignment, John Knox taught me how little I really knew, and subsequently became my Arty mentor. I owe a great deal to his On-The Job mentoring --- much of it under fire..

He was reassigned back to The Battery FDC in late 1969, and was sorely missed by all of us. Those of us who served with "LT Knox" speak of him frequently, and have attempted to locate him --- unsuccessfully and unfortunately.

I offer these comments merely to honor and remember a consummate professional, one outstanding leader and Officer, and one hell of a fine gentleman. Thank you for allowing this opportunity to offer great praise to one who is most "deserving".

John M



\* \* \* \* \*

**CLIFF DWELLER I & II** Info From Official Records: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: Nui Ba Den crests 968 m. above surrounding rice paddies and hamlets and has long been an enemy sanctuary. The Black Virgin Mountain has been VC home to communications elements, a rest area for those passing through, and a staging area for units intent on attacking Tay Ninh from the N. While the top and the bottom belonged to US forces, the middle, the enemy owned the steep slopes, caves, and crevices. For months, elements of 1st Brigade, 25th Inf Division have been engaged in ops to deny the enemy free access to/from the mountain. Operations were conducted day and night around the base by 2/34<sup>th</sup> Armor and **4/23rd Inf (M)**. Routes to / from the mountain were ambushed at night; arty constantly fell on numerous Intel targets detected by sensors; and psyops [psychological operations – ed.] assured the enemy of his doom. As body count mounted, and routes became tougher to negotiate, agent reports stated the enemy was starving on his mountain sanctuary. On 13 October it was learned that an enemy Bn identified as F33, located there in 1966, had returned in an effort to save the enemy from complete isolation. With his knowledge, plans were made to eliminate this element and to again make VC life a gamble on Nui Ba Den.

CONCEPT OF OPERATION: Elements of 1st Brigade under command of 3/22nd Inf to reconnoiter Nui Ba Den from 21-23 October to find and destroy enemy forces. The 3/22nd Infantry would be augmented with A/2/34th Armor, reinforced with one platoon of **C Co, 4/23rd Inf (M)**; **B Co. 4/23rd Inf (M)**; 2 PRU teams; and an RF Co. from Tay Ninh sector. These elements constituting TF Jones, would set up blocking positions on Nui Cao, on the southern slopes in the vicinity of the Pagoda, at the base below the Pagoda, and in the east along TL243. Other elements would be lifted to the mountain top and conduct a detailed reconnaissance down the E slopes. Supporting arty to be provided by elements of the 7/11 Artillery (DS) and 7/9th Artillery at FSB Buell, Rawlins, and St. Barbara. In addition C/3/13th Artillery would move from Tay Ninh Base to provide support for forces moving down the E slope. Equipped with this information, 3/22<sup>nd</sup> Infantry developed plans provided coordination. By 1800 hrs details had been worked out, commanders briefed and the operation set to begin next morning. [Included to show nastiness of the area.]

(21 – 23 October 69). 21 October 69, at first light elements of 1st Brigade, 25th Inf Division under command of 3/22<sup>nd</sup> Infantry moved to the mountain to destroy VC/NVA forces and their base of operation, assist RVN in rural development, pacification and civic action programs; assist training and supporting RVN forces, and prepared to reinforce US and ARVN forces within the TAOI as directed. This group, Task Force Jones, included: 3/22nd Infantry; plus A/2/34th Armor; **1st Platoon, C/4/23, B/4/23rd Inf (M)**; two PRU teams, and one RF Company. They took up blocking positions on Nui Cao near the Pagoda and east along TL 243. Artillery support was provided by 7/11 Artillery (DS) and 7/9<sup>th</sup> Artillery at FSBs Buell, St. Barbara and Rawlins. 3/13<sup>th</sup> Artillery moved from Tay Ninh Base to provide direct support on the east slope.

On 21 October, the mountain was clear as A Company 2/34 and **B Company, 4<sup>th</sup> Bn, 23rd Inf (M)** moved to designated locations. By 0910 one Plt A/2/34 & one **Plat C Co 4/23<sup>rd</sup> Inf** secured an LZ at XT 287560 at the south base of the mountain. Five minutes later **B Co 4<sup>th</sup>23<sup>rd</sup>(Mech)** and C/3/13 were in position vic old FSB Bragg to support the S and E slopes. At 1010 B Company 3/22<sup>nd</sup> Infantry completed its assault to XT 287560 and began ascending to their blocking position. At 1047 one platoon B/3/22 completed their assault to top of Nui Cao, inserting one ship at a time after the LZ had been prepped by seven arty batteries and three airstrikes. By 1100, A/2/34 Armor was in a blocking position at XT301593. By noon first day, 1st Brigade was in position awaiting movement to the mountain top and their subsequent descent in search of F33 Battalion. This day **Lt John D. Revier**, C Co was killed in action.

At 1520 hrs, C/3/22 Inf and two PRU teams completed their lift by CH47 to top of Nui Ba Den and began the recon mission. This was followed by the lift of Recon Platoon and one platoon of A/3/22 Infantry to serve as RRF.

The night of 21 October proved to be the operation's most eventful.. D Co laagered near the Pagoda, & had an ambush patrol at XT 281572. C Co. laagered at XT285585, and the platoon of B Co. at XT 271605. **Bravo Co 4/23rd Inf (M)** had ambushes at XT355592, XT329588 and XT344567. At 2030 hrs A/2/34th Armor observed eight VC moving northwest at 500 m. These were engaged with artillery; at 2045 15 more VC were spotted via starlight scope and were engaged with organic weapons, artillery, nighthawk (Little Bear 196), and LFT (Centaur 52). Initial report included five VC KIA, four AK-47s and two RPG launchers. The 160th RF Co swept the con-tact area and reported ten more VC KIA. One RF soldier was slightly wounded by SA fire during the sweep. At 2215, D Co engaged one VC with organic weapons resulting in one VC KIA. From 0026 to 0305, A/2/34th Armor was supported by Shadow 62 and 64.

Morning of **22 October**, friendly forces began sweeping the contact area. A/2/34's wrap-up found 20 VC KIA; 4 RPG-2 and one RPG-7 launcher, 20 B-40 rounds, eight B-41 rounds and 8 Chicom hand grenades captured. D Co. on their sweep located an additional 5 VC KIA. At 0730 all forces moved out pursuing the enemy. A **Bravo Co 4/23rd Inf (M)** M113 detonated a mine resulting in one KIA and five WIA on a sweep on the east side of the mountain. The vehicle was a combat loss. D Co reconn'd the area near the Pagoda at 0840. They found three VC in a cave and engaged them with organic weapons, killing all three. Again at 1000 hrs Centaur 46 VR Team, supporting D Co, found and engaged four VC resulting in four VC KBH. At 1030 Delta engaged two VC in a cave with SA, M79, and hand grenades with unknown results.

**Tomahawk Robert L. Reiplinger of Bravo Co was KIA this day.**

By the 2<sup>nd</sup> afternoon, C Company [22<sup>nd</sup>] had negotiated the E slope down to PL Everest. At 1300 D Company found a cave with a plastic pipe leading into it; and at 1525 Centaur 46 engaged 1 VC resulting in 1 VC KBH and 1 weapon destroyed. At

1620 hrs Delta Co began receiving SA fire from 10-15 VC & returned fire. Results: 1 US KIA who was evac'd from the Pagoda by Yellow Jacket 005, WO Derck. Enemy losses were 7 KIA (BC) and 5 credited to Diamondhead 50, and 2 to D Co. The night of 22 October was relatively uneventful. C Company had the only sighting, a light, 150 m. SW. They engaged with unknown results.

On 23 October at 0810, C Company departed their night laager. At 0945 D Company found 3 NVA shirts, cooking utensils, and one Chicom grenade, a cave 15' X 20' with bed, and a cave 20' X 50' with table and chairs. At 1000 D Co received fire from two VC located 200 meters northwest. The contact was supported by Issue [?? - ed] 12, Centaur 41, and Blue Max Delta engaged 3 VC - unknown results. D Company had 1 WIA and swept the area with negative findings. By 1040 hours C Company had arrived at PL McKinley and was continuing its move downhill. At noon it was decided that D Company and blocking forces at the base would remain in position overnight while other elements would be extracted. At 1610, C Company located two VC in a cave, and engaged them with flame thrower, resulting in 1wo VC KIA. By 1855, C Company, the PRU, one Plt of B Co. the recon Plt, and one Platoon of A Company had all been airlifted from the area.

During the night of 23 October heavy movement was detected by units remaining in the operational area. D Company received ten rds AK fire and A/2/34th Armor fired on a lighted trip flare. Night hawk aircraft checked the area with negative findings. D/3/22 Inf and A/2/34th Armor swept the area at dawn Oct 24 with negative findings. At 1005 hrs D Company was airlifted back to Tay Ninh Base, and blocking and security forces began moving back to their bases, bringing to a close "Operation CLIFF DWELLER".

5. RECAP: In summary, "Operation Cliff Dweller" resulted in 44 VC KIA: four AK-47, four RPG-2, one RPG-7, 20 B-40 rounds, eight B-41 rounds, nine CHICOM grenades captured in action; one weapon destroyed. Friendly casualties totaled two US KIA and six US WIA. The cliff dwellers learned from 1st Brigade forces that his was a tenuous existence. No longer was the Black Virgin Mountain a sanctuary for the VC and a psychological obstacle in the path of allied success. The enemy was taught that the mountain was no longer exclusively his.

With enemy forces dealt a severe blow, denial ops began again 25 October to cut off his routes to and from the mountain; persistent CS drops were made, arty resumed pounding targets around the base and on the mountain; and Psyops warned the enemy of his eventual fate.

\* \* \* \* \*

This letter, along with two later ones, were given to the Battalion by the brother of Lt. Lt. David H. Stoppelwerth, Gerald.

7 Nov 1969

Dear Brother,

Today I sit and clean my weapon in preparation of tomorrow's big operation. Alpha Company has been given the mission to move into an area known as :the "Crescent." It's an identified VC and NVA Sanctuary during the rainy season because US troops

cannot move into the area of the deep water and heavy mud. The rainy season is nearly over and we're hoping to surprise the gooks. We'll probably spend five to six days beating bush seeking our elusive enemy. Send my regards to Greg, Keith, Robin Bains and Barb.

***This letter was written by Lt. David H. Stoppelwerth to his brother Gerald Stoppelwerth***

23 Nov. 69

*Dear Brother,*

*My Unit is based at Tay Ninh base camp near Tay Ninh city in Tay Ninh Province. The city is the 4<sup>th</sup> largest in Vietnam and is a historical religious center, home of the Cao Dai Temple.*

*The principle AO (area of operation) extends east of Tay Ninh to the Saigon River (Song Saigon) including the village of Dau Tieng. The southern boundary is a mile south of Highway 239. The mountain Nui Ba Den (Black Virgin Mountain) is the northern extremity of our AO. Accompanying this letter is an attempt of a map. At action (1) two of my squads were ambushed after dark by V.C. They received several rounds of RPG (rocket propelled grenades much like our old bazooka) of which one hit target causing a minimum of damage to the Armored Personal Carrier and a few pieces of shrapnel in one man's shoulder. Another man was knocked off the carrier and was missing for several hours. The RPG fire was accompanied by AK 47 fire. The V.C. hit and ran. We inflicted no damage to them.*

*On 21 November the company took AK fire from a few V.C. snipers in the vicinity of (2). We returned and swept through the area discovering VC bunkers, hooches, rice, bayonets and other sundry items but no V.C.*

*The next day alpha company had a road security mission on Highway 13 from Tay Ninh to Grant Fire Base. (just off the map). My platoon covered the road from Soui Da to Grant of which half was beyond our Battalion AO.*

*Near 1600 the mission was complete and the convoy traveled safely. At that time I preceded to Grant to pick up a small ambush unit (12 men) led by a captain and first sergeant from the First Calvary Division. I delivered these people to the vicinity of (3) where they would drop into the woodline and set up an ambush for that night. I returned to the night bivouac sight ("logger") marked \*A and rejoined my company.*

*About first dark 1900 we received reports that the 1<sup>st</sup> Calvary ambush people made contact and had several personnel wounded. Our orders were to standby and be ready to help. We could see in the distant sky gunships, (helicopters) circling the area firing their mini-guns and rockets preparing for a medevac to evacuate the wounded.*

*Again the voice came over the radio ordering Alpha Company to rescue the small ambush unit. Helicopters could not land in the area because of enemy fire and the men were stranded surrounded by a superior enemy element. The company commander gave a very brief operation order "you Lt. Stoppelwerth will have the lead platoon".*

*Once we mounted the "tracks" (Army personnel carriers) we scrambled in the dark to highway 243, made the turn at Soui Da and traveled east on highway 13. Just as we left Soui Da all hell broke loose. There were ten tracks on the mission and I was*

*riding on the second track. Our orders were to run through the fire at top speed (35 mph.). The night was like day as illuminator flares were dropped from gunships. Rockets to the left of us, rockets to the right of us, landing only 15 meters from our flanks. The night was alive with the constant noise of mini-guns, AK's and rockets. The CO ordered me to go off the road and get my tracks on line and move south towards the woodline.*

*The tracks slowly moved forward to the wood lines with orders not to fire, there were "friendlies", to our front. About 25 meters from the woodline we spotted movement yet didn't know whether they were friendlies or foes. Another illumination flare brightened the night and there in the front of my track were the 12 men from the 1<sup>st</sup> Calvary Div. huddled around their wounded. I dismounted my personnel to secure the ambush as we loaded their wounded on stretchers and placed them inside the tracks. Meanwhile our 50 caliber machine guns, M-79 grenade launchers opened fire into the wood line while the gunships continued their rocket and mini-gun fire.*

*My platoon rushed back to the road and made our way back to Soui Da where a helicopter picked up the wounded.*

*The 1<sup>st</sup> Sergeant had a head wound. The bullet entered his forehead and exited above his ear. Another man would lose his right arm below the elbow while a third man was hit in the stomach and ribs.*

*As the chopper retrieved the wounded I could hear the distant rumble of artillery rounds blanket that scene of death. Two V.C. were known dead and one American died en route to the hospital.*

*The war goes on. Each man confident he will return home unharmed. The call to arms is loud and enticing, men rush to the scene of battle anxious to do his part. Men face the unknown challenges in a high state of excitement with a twisting twinge of fear gnawing in his bowels. After the fight is over those who walk away alive are wiser men, bigger men. Yet even so they are nearly crippled with fear and wonder about themselves. What was it that led them so anxiously to battle? And what guided those killing rounds that fell their buddies yet narrowly missed them?*

*It must be a fierce animal instinct that leads men to battle – it can't be reason.*

*Goodbye,  
Brother*

\* \* \* \* \*

Elsewhere on 24 October in a 3-day operation , Alpha, Bravo and Delta Co's, 2/12th Inf went to the center of a suspected enemy concentration along the S edge of the Boi Loi and Ho Bo woods. There, with support from the 116th Assault Helicopter Company, they broke the enemy force in a series of night small unit actions.

November had several finds of large quantities of rice and medical supplies.

The month's major contact took place at 0130 on 28 November. Elements of 2/27th Inf, were engaged by SA, RPG, AW and 60mm mortars. Fire was returned with organic weapons and artillery. The enemy withdrew, leaving 36 KIA, three CHICOM light MG's, two RPG-2 launchers, ten AK-47's, seven RPG-7 launchers and 25 rifle grenades.

\* \* \* \* \*

## **NEW CAMPAIGN Winter – Spring 1 November 1969 – 30 April 1970**

During October and November, 2/14th Infantry were busy in Hau Nghia & Binh Duong Provinces keeping enemy movement to a minimum. The Dragons, primarily using ambushes and patrols, engaged the enemy frequently during the two months of action. Dragon recon teams and ambush patrols kept the enemy off balance and at the same time discovered many supply caches.

In early November, on a routine recon, 14<sup>th</sup> Inf engaged an unknown size enemy force. With help from the 116th Assault helo Co, the 2/14<sup>th</sup> Infantry defeated the enemy and captured 4,000 rounds of SA ammo, 300 lbs of rice and destroyed three tunnels. Throughout the two-months, the Dragons penetrated deep into Ho Bo and Boi Loi woods and the enemy found it increasingly difficult to move without fear of detection. This was just a hint of the trend throughout the AO.

On 2 November, 4th Bn (Mech), 23rd Infantry contact resulted in 25 enemy KIA, 1 U.S. WIA, at 1100 hrs approx 1 km SE Xam Long , (XT362381).

December started with a large cache discovery by 2/27th (?) Inf of 128 -82mm rds, 43 cans charges, 30 RPG-7 rds, and 54 RPG -2 boosters. Numerous light contacts continued the rest of the month. As 1969 closed, the conflict was considerably changed from that of even 12-18 months before. The enemy operated only in small (rather than large) units against the Division's fire and patrol bases to at least maintain minimal presence. The Division responded by emphasizing small (rather than large) unit ops designed to insure rapid response to these limited enemy activities. FSBs had evolved into offensive tools, the anvils against which maneuver elements pushed enemy units in order for them to be fixed in place and destroyed by superior firepower. The 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division successes provided more time for active support and training of an increasingly effective ARVN force. Combined small unit actions were excellent chances or individuals to work directly with their

ARVN counterparts. The joint effort Dong Tieng, "progress together," produced increasing results. ARVN forces within the AOs improved markedly their techniques, professionalism and tenacity under US Allies and Advisors' guidance.

\* \* \* \* \*

An early innovation in quick-response fighting was an artillery platform that could be air lifted. The mobility of these "paddy platforms" enabled arty to move rapidly to support ground troops in remote areas. Guns mounted on barges also gave new mobility and range to arty batteries. Barged units could be moved quickly, and fire while being moved. Night patrols made further use of rivers and canals to reach ambush positions. Their skilled use of detection devices led to new successes in locating enemy and equipment hidden in rivers and canals.

Units began leaving outposts for several days at a time on operations in remote reaches of the AO. These “bushmaster” actions gave infantry units greater range in locating increasingly hard-to-find communists.

Another tactic designed to give infantry increased range was called “jitterbug.” Troops aboard helicopters were randomly inserted at suspected enemy locations to search, then they were extracted and reinserted at another spot.

Rome plows were used extensively to clear land. The huge plows destroyed enemy hiding places and neutralized booby traps. At the same time they were clearing new land for agriculture. Civil Affairs Programs (CAP) added a new dimension to ops by including intel gathering and psyop members with medical team visits to villages and hamlets. The concept was called Integrated Civic Action Projects.

Another innovation was the employment of Night Squawk helicopters, that made broadcasts and dropped leaflets on suspected enemy locations at night. They also sped to contact locations with broadcasts and leaflets. During daylight, psyop emphasis was on face-to-face meetings. Psyop troops visited small groups in villages and hamlets that weren’t reachable by other means. This not only curtailed enemy movement and ops, but cut off his supplies and unearthed hiding places at an unprecedented level. Fall and Winter 1969 found 25th Division troops digging the VC and NVA out of refuges in Ho Bo and Boi Loi Woods, the border area to Vam Co Dong River and the great mountain of Nui Ba Den.

2nd Brigade conducted extended combat patrols and recon ops into Ho Bo and Boi Loi Woods and the Citadel area in the central part division AO. 1st Brigade conducted combined operations in the districts around Nui Ba Den and Tay Ninh City in the AO’s northern sector. 3rd Brigade patrolled the S sector including Cu Chi and enemy infiltration routes between the Cambodian border and Vam Co Dong River. 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade maneuvers included extensive ops with the 25th ARVN Division and local RF / PF’s.

Fall and Winter 1969 found 25th Division troops digging VC and NVAs out of their refuges, Ho Bo and Boi Loi Woods, the border area to the Vam Co Dong River and the looming Nui Ba Den.

The battles on the border mark an unusual period in Tropic Lightning history. Facing a massed enemy operating from positions of relative safety, the division had achieved stunning victories. Infiltration over the border was severely curtailed. Harassment and extortion of local civilians by NVA was sharply reduced, and heavy damage was done to the enemy’s main force elements at a low cost to the allies. By late May the division was able to move freely throughout the area without attracting small unit contacts. Civic action teams went into the villages to find a new confidence there in the allied ability to defend. Civilians, no longer faced with fear of enemy reprisals cooperated with the US and ARVN soldiers by pointing out booby traps, supply caches and enemy bunker complexes. It was the enemy, though, who paid the final tribute to the division’s success. In Jun, the majority of main force units abandoned their positions along the border and moved north. Unable to establish

supply points inside RVN or extract support from the local population, or move freely in the area, the enemy Regts pulled back.

\* \* \* \* \*

*emails*

*Apr 10, 2010*

*Cliff,*

*1. Lt John David Revier Oct 69 (murdered in fragging @Tay Ninh BC Oct 25, 1969) Only about 2 weeks with Recon.*

*2. Lt David Allison seriously wounded near Mimot May 25, 1970 ( SFC Robinson "Sugar Bear") until Lt Jones arrived (West Point grad?). Took Command In March 1970*

*3. During a period of Jan Feb March no officer, just Shake n Bake NCO's SSG Conn and SSG Burch*

*4. Lt Beaver wasn't Recon Plt Leader in 1970 (mid 1969?), I believe it was 1969, He was Captain Beaver CPIP in 1970.*

*5. Don't remember Lt Olsen*

*6. Lt Jones took command mid July 1970 somewhere between Ops at Katum after withdrawing from Cambodia and move to Xuan Loc.*

*Dan Burch*

\* \* \* \* \*

*On 1 January, 1969, the US Force Strength in South Vietnam was 536, 040. By 31 December, this number had been reduced to 494, 819, approximately 39 thousand fewer. Thus, the US forces began the year with fewer men, lowered financing, and a mandate to turn over increasing level of existing resources to modernize the South Vietnamese forces.*

\* \* \* \* \*

On 31 December, the Joint Chiefs issued CINCPAC JSCP-70 assigning these subordinate undertakings for the coming year:

“(1) Make as difficult and costly as possible the continued support of the Viet Cong by North Vietnam, and cause North Vietnam to cease its direction of the Viet Cong insurgency , , , (2) defeat the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Armed Forces in South Vietnam and force withdrawal of the North Vietnamese forces; (3) extend Government of Vietnam dominion, direction, and control over all South Vietnam; (4) deter CPR [Communist China – ed.] intervention and defeat such intervention if it occurred.”

\* \* \* \* \*



## 1970 BORDER BATTLES, CAMBODIA, STAND-DOWN

### BACKGROUND

On 1 January, the US was fully committed to continuing the processes begun in 1969 of engaging the enemy while modernizing the equipment of the RVN military, training them, assisting in pacification, and withdrawing steadily from the theater.

In January, 1970 the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division was composed of 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn, 34<sup>th</sup> Armor (-). 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry, **4<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Mech) 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry**, and it was supported by 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion 11<sup>th</sup> Artillery. The overall operation against enemy forces in II FFV area was referred to as the Toan Thang Offensive.

\* \* \* \* \*

### OPERATION CLIFF DWELLER IV & AFTER

At the start of 1970, 1st Brigade conducted Op CLIFF DWELLER IV, (4 – 11 January 70, ) the longest sustained battle in months to finish clearing Nui Ba Den. Elements of 3/22d Inf were airlifted by Chinook to the mountain top and started working their way down in columns over the boulders toward the bottom. Task elements included Co's A, B, C, D and Recon Plt, 3/22<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Company A, 2/34<sup>th</sup> Armor; and Co A and one Plt Co D, 4th Bn, 9th Infantry. Supporting arty was B/7/11 Arty; C/3/13 Arty; A/7/9<sup>th</sup> Arty; and B/1/27 who fired 12, 653 rds in the period 4-12 Jan 70. Air support included A/25<sup>th</sup> Aviation Battalion (Little Bears), B/25<sup>th</sup> Aviation Battalion (Diamondbacks), 1<sup>st</sup> Aviation Brigade (Yellow Jackets), 187<sup>th</sup> assault helo Co (Crusaders), 242<sup>nd</sup> Assault Support Helo Company (Mule-skinners), D Troop 3/4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry (Centaur), A/2/20<sup>th</sup> ARA (Blue Max), USAF FACs (OV-10) [an aircraft designation], -100 TAC fighters, and AC-119 (Shadow) gunships.

Enemy losses were 186 KIA during the 8 day operation.

Info From Official Records: (4 Jan – 11 Jan '69) INTELLIGENCE:

a. Enemy—Nui Ba Den is a HQs of "shadow" government elements, a staging area for attacks on Tay Ninh City and other allied bases in Tay Ninh Province, and a stopover point on the infiltration route through War Zone C from Cambodia to 25th Infantry Division AO. CLIFF DWELLER IV was one of a series of denial operations carried out by 1st Bde, 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division on Nui Ba Den. In executing this operation, 1st Brigade assigned to the task the largest number of US troops ever to operate on Nui Ba Den.

b. Terrain—The terrain of Nui Ba Den is unlike any other in the Division AO. The ancient granite mountain is very steeply sloped, covered with enormous boulders, honey-combed with caves, crevasses and tunnels and low, tangled undergrowth covers the greater part of the slopes (except for rock slides).

c. Weather—Generally the weather was good—partly cloudy skies, not excessively warm. The altitude of Nui Ba Den allows for more cooling breezes than

normally in other areas of Tay Ninh Province. The one natural phenomenon which caused a problem was that of drafts on the slopes of the mountain. Helicopters attempting to resupply US forces on the slopes were unable to maintain position during the supply drops because of the heavy up- and downdrafts.

MISSION: to sweep the northeast slope of Nui Ba Den, killing and/or capturing as many enemy as possible to include supplies and materials which could be used by the enemy.

Cliff Dweller IV - CONCEPT OF OPERATION AND EXECUTION: On 4 January 1970 the operation commenced. The concept was to have two Infantry Companies sweep down the northeast slope and set up blocking positions a short distance from the bottom. A third Infantry company would sweep the base of the mountain from southeast to northwest, link up with the other two companies and all three would then sweep through the rock slide area (XT279603) to the base of the mountain.

Supporting forces would be put off the mountain, north and south of the rock slide and on Nui Cau from which a commanding view of the AO is afforded.

At 0800 hrs on 4 January the first CH-47s landed two Co's of 3/22<sup>nd</sup> Inf on Nui Ba Den at the Provisional Company installation. Between 0915-0935 hours a lift inserted the Recon Plt, 3/22 Infantry on Nui Cau (XT271605) where they established a blocking position and remained for the rest of the operation. Company B and C began moving down the northeast slope of Nui Ba Den on two axes. Because of difficulty moving in such terrain, 3/22 Inf progressed about 40% of the way down the mountain the first day. At 0934 hours on 4 Jan the demolition team from A/65th Engineer Battalion attached to 3/22 Infantry destroyed a booby trapped US fragmentation grenade approx 150 meters from the line of departure.

Night defensive positions were established at approx 1830-1900 hrs as further progress halted by darkness. Company C established its NDP approx 1700 m. north of the crest of Nui Ba Den (XT279598). Company B established its NDP approx 1200 m. Northeast of the crest of Nui Ba Den (XT238591). Some enemy probing was suspected first night but no contact made. Terrain made it difficult for units to establish perimeters so a series of strong points were established to serve as a perimeter, the most effective method of securing an NDP in these circumstances.

Earlier on 4 January (0645 hours), Alpha Company 2/34<sup>th</sup> Armor (-) and 548 RF Co occupied a blocking position at the northeast base of the mountain (XT279608). Slightly southeast, one Platoon of tanks from A/2/34 Armor (-) and one Platoon of D/4/9<sup>th</sup> Infantry set a second blocking position. Artillery support was provided by C/3/13th Artillery, and from 6 January, one Plt of B/7/11th Arty at FSB Base Bragg (XT334579). Security for the arty was provided by **one Platoon Charlie Co 4/23rd Inf (Mech)** at XT334579 and 163 RF Co. The first contact 4 January occurred at 1925 hrs when a sniper attached to Recon/3/22 Infantry observed and engaged three enemy 300 at meters south-southeast of the sniper's location with three rds of M-14 fire killing one.

At 0005 hrs 5 January an ambush position of Recon/3/22nd Infantry smelled marijuana and detected movement 35-40 meters below and east of their position. Engaging the movement with hand grenades and sniper fire, one enemy wearing black pajamas was killed. No return fire was received. The dead soldier was searched but he had neither weapons nor documents on him.

At approx 0700-0730 hrs 5 January, 3/22 Infantry resumed its sweep. Because of rain the previous evening movement was slow as the rocks were slippery and wet. Little forward progress was made the second day. About noon a 14 ship lift inserted A/3/22nd Infantry in an LZ secured by A/2/34 Armor and D/4/9 Infantry to recon from southeast to northwest along the base of the mountain to 200-300 meters up the slope. Company B and C moved down to set up a blocking position above the area to be swept by A/3/22 Infantry. As Co A swept, Co B on the S axis would swing behind Co A to protect its rear. Co C afforded protection from above.

Company A located one tunnel with room (10x20x30) at 1635 hrs (XT293595), and uncovered a small VC camp with cooking area, two truck batteries, clothing and web gear. The room was large enough for 35 individuals. There were signs of recent activity within 72 hrs. At 1945 hrs Company B observed movement and a light 400 meters west of their NDP. Engaging the movement with organic weapons all movement ceased and the light went out.

At 1150 the next day (6 January), A/3/22 Infantry on a recon of this contact area located 12 graves containing 12 enemy killed by small arms (SA) fire. No weapons or documents were uncovered. The enemy dead wore green NVA uniforms. Also on 6 Jan with Company B moving from its NDP to the bottom of the mountain where another NDP was established, just before setting up, they located three caves. They recon'd with fragmentation grenades. No return fire was received. Co A continued moving across the lower slope toward the rock slide to the NW (XT279603). Company C moved to within 400 m. of the mountain and established an NDP.

On 7 January, because B/3/22 Infantry made contact the day before, CLIFF DWELLER IV was extended. One platoon from D/4/9 Infantry securing the tank Platoon of A/2/34 Armor at the southern blocking position was relieved by an RF Co. At 1030 hrs Company B searched a cave at (XT288599) & located seven US M-1s, one SKS carbine, two M-72 LAWs, nine M-16 magazines (fully loaded), one can 400 rounds M-1 ammo, 1RPG rd, 1Chicom hand grenade, one VC gas mask, one NVA shovel, four US poncho liners, two US canteens, one first aid packet, one bar soap, US soybean oil, C-ration cans, one fish net, a towel, four (female) pants, four sets underwear with bells (female), one garden (15x20) and two enemy KIA by SA fire and fragmentation grenades (accredited to the A/3/22 Infantry recon by fire of the cave the previous day). All explosives were destroyed by EOD, A/65th Engineers, and the weapons sent to Tay Ninh Base.

At 1600 Co B located ten lbs documents in a cave. Later info revealed that the docs were tax receipts, meeting reports, envelopes, financial reports and medical certificates which mainly concerned Toa Thanh District unit and District Committees, and a list of changes in Letter Box Numbers for Toa Thanh (D) Sections and Assn's to have become effective 17 September 68. Because of the terrain it was impossible to tell whether there had been recent activity in the area. At 1615, B/3/22 Inf saw eight enemy evading into a cave (XT286600). US forces attempted to get the enemy to Chieu Hoi, but were answered with fragmentation grenades, wounding three US troops. At 1820 the cave was engaged with CS and multi-shot flame thrower

resulting in 8 enemy killed. Recon Plt saw one indiv 125 meters northwest of their position at 2045 hours, engaged the enemy with organic weapons, & one enemy soldier was killed.

Beginning on 8 Jan and for the next two days until the Operation ended 11 January, US forces came under almost constant enemy fire during daylight—mostly accurate sniper fire from well-entrenched enemy. As US forces neared the rock slide, enemy fires increased. Only when forward movement slowed did enemy fire slacken. As Company A came adjacent to Company C's flank at about 0750 on 8 January (XT276604), heavy contact was established. The left point of Company C received fire from 3-4 enemy at about 0800. When return fire from M60 MG's was placed on the enemy snipers, US forces began receiving heavy fire with SA, RPGs, sniper fire and M-79 CS rounds. As Inf engaged the enemy with organic weapons, air support saturated the area with fire from six light fire teams, three CS drops, 1 "Flame Bath" drop and seven TAC air bombing strikes. Four artillery batteries (1827 rounds), main tank guns and AW fire from blocking forces were also brought to bear against the enemy during the day. A break in contact occurred at 0835. Five minutes later Company A took SA and RPG fire from an estimated enemy platoon from several small caves. The enemy continued to fire at US forces throughout the rest of the day, mainly sniper fire. Movement was difficult because of terrain and the fact that US troops had to expose their position when moving. Company C was able to move only about 50-75 meters during the first two days of contact. At 1344 a resupply helo from Company A, 25th Avn Bn was hit by an RPG. The helicopter crashed and burned. Three US were wounded by shrapnel. The helicopter was destroyed. The helicopter was to MEDEVAC 2 US WIAs but they were killed by AH-1G (Cobra) rocket fire as the gunship was making a firing run to cover for the downed helo and its crew. Close contact of US forces and the confusion caused by intense enemy SA and AW fire contributed to the crash. Just prior, a Kit Carson Scout was killed by an explosion of unknown origin. He and two US troops were trying to move toward the downed helicopter when ordered by their Plt leader to withdraw.

Just as they started to withdraw there was an explosion that knocked all three men to the ground. The two US troops were not wounded but the Kit Carson Scout was killed by the concussion. No cause for the explosion could be determined. This Kit Carson Scout (Tran Van Oi) and another Kit Carson Scout (Tran Van Vien) have been recommended for the Silver Star for bravery and valor during this operation.

At approx 1800 hrs the enemy broke contact. US forces established NDPs in place. No further contact was established during darkness. 62 enemy had been killed this first day of heavy contact. After searching the contact area, US forces evacuated one M-1 carbine, one SKS rifle, 10 lbs documents and four lbs of medical supplies. 6 US soldiers were WIA. At 1958 hrs a member of Recon 3/22 Inf was killed by an enemy sniper. He was helping unload a resupply drop amid moderate sniper fire when the incident occurred. [NOTE: The authors of this (official) report, SP4 Henry Walsh and SP4 Robert Wright initially attempted to report that this soldier died when accidentally crushed by a resupply load dropped from a CH-47. This fact was confirmed by multiple sources, including the aviators. They were ordered to change

the paragraph to the wording used here; when they objected to the inaccuracy, they were threatened with reassignment to infantry duty by the division chief of staff.]

Outside Operation Cliff Dweller in the Toan Thang Offensive, on 5 January, an APC from **Bravo Co, 4th of the 23rd** detonated a mine, destroying the vehicle and wounded one man inside the track in a search operation 9 km Southeast of Tay Ninh (XT303375).

On 8 January at 1000 hrs, elements of the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, US 25<sup>th</sup> Inf Division received small arms and automatic weapons fire from an unknown- size enemy force seven miles north-northeast of Tay Ninh City. The returned fire, and supported by arty, helo gunships, and Tac air. At 1800 the enemy withdrew, leaving 40+ [? – ed.] in the battle area. US casualties were four WIA, no KIA.

On 9 January, D/3/22<sup>nd</sup> Infantry relieved A/3/22 which was extracted to Tay Ninh Base Camp. Company D was to sweep the area of the rock slide and move to the "saddle, " but because of accurate sniper fire D/3/22 Infantry was unable to make progress toward the enemy positions and remained in place until pulled off the mountain 11 January. During the morning of 9 Jan 3 tubes of 105mm howitzer of B/7/11<sup>th</sup> Artillery moved to the northern blocking position of A Co. 2/34 Armor (-) to provide more accurate and direct support. At 1600 hrs Company A, 4/9<sup>th</sup> Infantry landed on Nui Cau and moved to the position secured by Recon/3/22<sup>nd</sup> Infantry where the company remained the night. The 548<sup>th</sup> RF Company securing this position was replaced by B/3/22 Inf (-) the afternoon of 9 January. One platoon from Company B provided security for the tank Platoon at the southern blocking position. Company B would also act as reaction force in support of 3/22<sup>nd</sup> Infantry on the mountain.

At 1000hrs, 3/22 Infantry took heavy sniper fire as they closed on the rock slide area. US forces were attempting to sweep the hillside nearby but because the enemy was so well-entrenched, decided moving forward would cost too many casualties. Securing their positions, US forces returned enemy fire with organic weapons, one CS drop, five light fire teams, eight TAC air strikes, five "Flame Bath" drops and three arty batteries, killing 47 enemy in contact which lasted all day long. Two US were WIA initially, the only casualties of the action. At 1430 a MEDEVAC took heavy ground fire but suffered no casualties.

During the three day contact heavy enemy fire was directed at resupply and MEDEVAC helicopters supporting the op. Whenever helos approached the mountain the majority of enemy fire would be directed at them. A few of the enemy would try to spray suppressive fire on GIs to protect others who exposed themselves in the hope of damaging / destroying a helicopter. Though faced with this danger, resupply and MEDEVAC helicopters carried out their missions admirably. Fighting continued through most of 9 Jan, & slackened off by mid-afternoon. Sporadic SA fire was exchanged until around 1800 hrs.

On 9 January at 0915, an **A&B Cos, 4th Bn 23rd Inf (Mech)** , 1st Brigade, 25th Infantry Division engaged 100 enemy seven mi NE Tay Ninh City. at XT276600

killing 47 3nemy. Artillery, TAC AIR and helos support the action. US casualties stated as 4 WIA. However,

**Danny J. Peterson** (Medal Of Honor) serving in **Bravo Co, 4<sup>th</sup> Bn (Mech), 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry** was killed in action this day, 9 January, 1970. His Medal of Honor citation reads:

"Sp4 Petersen distinguished himself while serving as an armored personnel carrier commander with Company B during a combat operation against a North Vietnamese Army Force estimated to be of battalion size. During the initial contact with the enemy, an armored personnel carrier was disabled and the crewmen were pinned down by the heavy onslaught of enemy small arms, automatic weapons and rocket-propelled grenade fire. Sp4 Petersen immediately maneuvered his armored personnel carrier to a position between the disabled vehicle and the enemy. He placed suppressive fire on the enemy's well-fortified position, thereby enabling the crew members of the disabled personnel carrier to repair their vehicle. He then maneuvered his vehicle, while still under heavy hostile fire to within 10 feet of the enemy's defensive emplacement. After a period of intense fighting, his vehicle received a direct hit and the driver was wounded. With extraordinary courage and selfless disregard for his own safety, Sp4 Petersen carried his wounded comrade 45 meters across the bullet-swept field to a secure area. He then voluntarily returned to his disabled armored personnel carrier to provide covering fire for both the other vehicles and the dismounted personnel of his platoon as they withdrew.

Despite heavy fire from 3 sides, he remained with his disabled vehicle, alone and completely exposed. Sp4 Petersen was standing on top of his vehicle, firing his weapon, when he was mortally wounded. His heroic and selfless actions prevented further loss of life in his platoon. Sp4 Petersen's conspicuous gallantry and extraordinary heroism are in the highest traditions of the service and reflect great credit on him, his unit, and the U.S. Army."

In that same action, per Tropic Lightning News of 2 Feb, 1970: Silver star medals were awarded to three members of **Bravo Co**: "Three members of **Bravo Company 4th Battalion, (Mechanized) 23d Infantry Tomahawks** have been awarded the Silver Star for actions while aiding an ARVN Regional Force where 88 enemy soldiers were killed. Captain Frederick Drew of Bakersfield, Calif., won the Silver Star for aiding the wounded and directing his company's fire into the enemy positions. Corporal Bufford Lyons of Newark, N.J. was awarded the Silver Star when he maneuvered his damaged track in position to direct 50 Caliber machine-gun fire into enemy positions. Specialist Four Patrick Bryan of Tulsa, Okla., was awarded the Silver Star for protecting the company command track from his side mounted machine gun after it had been damaged.

\* \* \* \* \*

Jan 9, 10  
Hi Mike,

*I was in the battle on 1/9/70. Myself, Lionel Shirley (driving) and Butch Brennan (T.C.) were riding atop track 12. I was behind a side mounted .50 cal. on the right*

rear side when we were hit by an RPG. It hit just behind Lionel's head and to the left side of the TC hatch. I heard the explosion initially and then could not hear anything for a few minutes. I saw Butch rise up in the TC hatch and turn around and then fall down into the track. The force of the blast knocked me backwards and when I regained my balance, I jumped into the rear top hatch and was going to help Lionel and Butch get out. After I realized they had already exited the rear, I jumped back atop the track, got behind my .50 and began putting out as much fire as I could. I stayed atop and continued to fire until the cease fire was given.

I was tremendously depressed because I had been with Lionel and Butch since August of 69 and we all relied on each other. Now they were gone and I only knew they were alive when dusted off. Fortunately, both survived. Lionel came back after about two or three months. He had a lot of wounds from the RPG on the back of his head and neck and on his chest. When that RPG hit I just knew he was dead. Thank God he wasn't.

Butch never came back and went back to the states. He had a wounded hand and had metal in his chest that was too close to his heart to operate. But, thank God he made it home too.

I was also there with Mark, on Jan. 13th. when he was killed. We were stuck in the mud and his track hooked up to ours and attempted to pull us out. As I recall, his track got stuck too. We had to wait and were eventually both pulled out by a track retriever. As the retriever began to pull both of our tracks hooked together, a mine detonated and jerked Mark's track. I was told he was riding on the front of the track and the larch threw him off and under the track. He was killed instantly.

Mike, I can remember Danny's name and I know I knew him, but for the life of me I cannot put a face with his name. If you have a picture of him, I would appreciate it if you could send me a copy via e-mail. I am now totally blind but my wife could describe Danny to me and maybe I could remember his face. I am sorry I can't remember his face but, I mourn those guys too, as well as others. I will never forget Jan. 9th. and each year I begin thinking of that date for about two weeks before it gets here. I think of it and those guys all year but more as it gets closer. Two years ago my wife drove me to Natawaka KS. so I could visit Danny's grave. God bless his soul.

Mike, God bless you during this time of remembrance and sorrow. Thanks for sharing.

Can you tell me which track you and Danny were on? Until later,  
Pat Bryan, Bravo 1st Plt. track 12

Jan 9, 10

Events of 1/9/70: Pat -- I was with Recon at that time and we were used as a blocking force south on No name road to the east. It was a huge bowl and we were at the top of it. We never got into it but I remember the location. You are correct it was between Hunter and No Name south of 26

Doug

Jan 11, 10

Hi Donn, the guy from St Charles SD is Larry Allyn, I'm in contact with him and Larry Lee who now lives in Texas. Larry Allyn is planning on coming to LV along

with David Frikle from Nebraska. Allyn and Frickle came into A Co in Feb. '68, think both got hit at one time or another and not sure they came back to the Co for the end of their 12 months. I don't know if Larry Lee will come to the reunion or not. Lee doesn't have email. I've mailed flyers to Allyn, Frickle, Lee and Danny Simonsen. I'll know more as it gets closer.

Butch, David Frickle was in the FDC with you. I think Allyn was on 4-2. Danny Simonsen was an FO in one of the line platoons but don't remember which one. Larry Lee was on 4-3 as the TC before me, he rotated in September '68.

Mike Timko was a 4th platoon guy from Steubenville Ohio, I talked to him about 10 yrs ago and he didn't want to stay in contact or re-live anything. He did tell me that Herb xxxx was in Bonner's Ferry or Harper's Ferry at that time but I never found him, now I can't remember his name. Dave Shiley is another Ohio boy but I never was able to track him down.

Steve J.

Mar 31, 10

Cliff, -- Captain Drew was with Bravo into 70. He was our CO on 1/9/70 when Danny (CMH awarded) was killed. My track had been hit by an RPG and I was only one not wounded and provided cover fire for Cpt. Drew to call in support. I don't [confusing text here – ed] remember exactly when he left but, he did not go to Cambodia with us. He lives in Bakersfield CA and his phone number is listed in the data base phone book. Dave, -- I was for all intents and purposes the battalion communication NCO from around June 70 in Cambodia until the end. There was a staff sergeant who was the official 31G40 but he always stayed wherever the rear was while I was always with the TOC.

When you write about a brigade HQ at Katum I'm curious. I know there was a SF camp up near Katum but I always thought the brigade HQ was built in May 70 when Cambodia happened. When we came out of Cambodia we set up inside the old brigade perimeter. They'd already left to go back to Tay Ninh, I believe. So what was there in 68 - 69?

Reunion got canceled because of low turnout but we may be turning it back on. Expect email from John. Marty.

Pat Bryan Bravo 69 – 70 PS Hey Whitey, do you remember anything about Captain Horn tour or what happened to him?

Nov 25, 2010,

Doug, -

Denny had been in country for about 10 months when he was killed. All of us in the squad were there about the same amount of time. We were replacements for Bravo Co. after the losses during the battle of Tay Ninh. Denny was the only one of our squad to get killed. All of us had PHs but, the rest of us made it through the year. One other guy, Butch Brennan, was wounded severely enough to go home during that year when an RPG hit on top of Bravo 12 on January 9th. 1970. The battle in which Danny Peterson was killed.

Denny was promoted to Sgt. after attending the NCO school in Cu Chi and was number one in his class. He was our squad leader when he was killed. I was



*promoted to Sgt. after his death ... kind of by default. After Cambodia, we moved to Xuan Loc (Sp?) and I led the squad until I left the latter part of July.*

*I have a lot of guilt too because I felt I should have been in that tree line with Denny. But, Denny was the kind of guy who would have wanted to be in there and in the lead. The jungle was very thick in there and I know that Denny just could not have seen the NVA soldier that shot him, until too late.*

*Pat*

*[Another Nov 25, '10 message from Pat B. ]*

*Doug, - I was on the road and Denny [Danny? – ed] was leading a security column inside the tree line when he was shot by a sniper. He was killed instantly.*

*After he was*

*brought out, we set up a perimeter in a small clearing just off the road. his body was taken out by helicopter and we pulled out on the road again in a column. Then, all hell broke out. I was on Bravo 12 with Dave Baronowski (TC), Ed Pinnow (Driver) and SSGT Gordon Michaels. I was manning a side mounted .50 cal. We hit a mine and Dave was thrown off the track with his .50 cal. Ed was wounded and unconscious SGT Michaels was wounded and thrown into the tree line. I received a small wound when my .50 cal hit me under the chin. A track hit a mine at the other end of the column and everything stopped on the road. Then the NVA began lobbing mortars up and down the road. I ended up in a ditch aside the road and began small arms fire along with a bunch of others who had dismounted. There was a lot of heavy fire for some time. after the fire ceased, Ed and SGT Michaels were taken away by medevac. Sgt Michaels did not return. I didn't know the extent of his injuries but, he lived. Ed returned after treatment.*

*The only thing I can add about Denny is that ..I used to vacation in Galveston when my boys were small and I always intended to try to look up his parents. I just couldn't bring myself to do it. About 5 years ago I got ahold of Denny's aunt. She was the only Valusek related to Denny still in the Galveston area. She was probably 80 or so then. She said Denny's parents had passed away some time ago and his sisters and brother were living elsewhere now. She also told me that Denny is buried in a cemetery in Texas City, Texas.*

*Since the reunion in Branson, Dave Baronowski, Ed Pinnow, Lionel Shirley, Don Wickam and myself with our wives, have met somewhere and reunited and we always drink a toast to Denny on June the 8th.*

*Pat*

\* \* \* \* \*

On 10 January (Saturday), at 1030 hrs a **Mech Inf** element of 1<sup>st</sup> Bde, 25<sup>th</sup> Division discovered 56 dead nine miles southeast of Tay Ninh City, apparently from the 9 January engagement of this unit plus elements of RVN LF troops. Weapons & ammo were also captured. The enemy had apparently been killed by the same unit in an engagement the day before.

Same day, another element of 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade 25<sup>th</sup> Inf Division received small arms, automatic weapons and grenade fire from unknown size enemy force seven miles northeast of Tay Ninh City, supported as previous day's engagement. Small arms fire was exchanged and a few minutes later mech infantry from 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade arrived to reinforce. At 1750 enemy withdrew leaving 13 dead. US casualties were 12 WIA, no KIA.

On 13 January (Tuesday), a Ranger element of 25<sup>th</sup> Inf Division engaged enemy six miles north of Go Dau Ha, 10 Mi southeast of Tay Ninh City, with small arms & automatic weapons. A few minutes later **a Mech Inf force from 1<sup>st</sup> Bde, 25<sup>th</sup> Inf Division** reinforced and also engaged the enemy. Helos also flew support. Results were four enemy KIA, US had one KHA and three wounded.

**Mark P Rudolph of Bravo Company, 4<sup>th</sup>/23<sup>rd</sup> (Mech) was KIA this day.**

\* \* \* \* \*

***This is the final letter given to the Battalion By Gerald Stoppelwerth, Lt. David Stoppelwerth's brother.***

14 Jan, 1970

Dear Brother,

*Enclosed in this letter are some pictures and clippings concerning my unit and the area of operation. You might find them of some interest*

*Things here are picking up some. It seems the NVA are drifting back across the Cambodian border large numbers. Today I discovered three booby traps (Chi-Cong grenade type [anti-personnel mines] and blew them in place using C-4. My Company commander and two medics were not so fortunate. All three were wounded by the same-type small mine causing slight skin lacerations, nothing real serious. However another man was killed when he tripped on a mine that also included an 82mm mortar round. He died of shock within minutes of the blast.*

*I've been fortunate. I've not yet been hurt by any hostile action.*

*If I can hold out for another couple months I should have it made.*

DHS

\* \* \* \* \*

The 1st Brigade S-3 Daily Staff Journal noted that the Tay Ninh Province Chief said the enemy elements involved in the contact were F-31 and F-51 Sapper Bns of 271st NVA Regiment. This report has not been confirmed through captured document readouts or any other means. [On 19 May 69 the F-31 Sapper Bn had been involved in an attack on the signal installation atop Nui Ba Den and therefore may still have elements in the area, possibly with the same mission.]

RESULTS: Operation Cliff Dweller IV was a successful denial operation on Nui Ba Den carried out by 1st Brigade. Enemy losses during the seven days were 156 KIA. US forces suffered three men KIA and one Kit Carson Scout KIA. 55 American soldiers were wounded, of whom eight were evacuated for treatment. The remaining wounded returned to their units after a short period of convalescence. The inability to use Nui Ba Den as a refuge seriously hurt enemy plans to mount a coordinated, effective offensive in Tay Ninh Province. Operation Cliff Dweller IV drastically reduced the enemy potential to mount a significant offensive without heavily reinforcing the forces remaining in the mountain refuge.

#### ANALYSIS:

a. Because of the terrain in which this operation took place, many problems were encountered, not all of which could be successfully overcome. (1) Resupply. (a) US infantry elements required a larger number of smoke grenades to mark their positions for resupply drops and MEDEVACs, and for ID of friendly positions by supporting fires. (b) US equipment losses were abnormally high due to the difficulty troops met in maneuvering in the rock-strewn terrain, (c) Resupply was difficult due to air turbulence on the mountain slopes; inability of resupply helicopters to place the load a where directed due to irregular, steep terrain; heavy enemy sniper fire directed at resupply helos; loss of resupply loads into holes and crevasses; loss of loads due to "drop-off" method; the dropping of resupply loads into areas inaccessible to US troops; and problems always involved in night resupply..

Pathfinders controlled supply drops and even though faced with almost insurmountable problems managed to complete many more resupply missions than was expected. (d) The loss of water resupply, caused by the need to drop loads rather than place them in planned locations, and the loss of equipment, caused by operating in such unfavorable terrain, were two major problems.

b. Communications. Though there were no reported failures in or loss of commo equipment, the Battalion command net used while contact was in effect became heavily loaded at times.

c. Tactics. An innovation employed by Company C, 3/22nd Inf is the Point Squad: an eight-man, all-volunteer group which acts as a forward recon element. Because the unit acts only in this capacity, it has built up experience needed to perform the role of "point" more professionally than could the rotating system. The squad consists of an experienced NCO, one "tunnel rat", one grenadier, one M-60 gunner and four team members. The success experienced with the point squad has been more than satisfactory.

d. Snipers. During CLIFF DWELLER IV, US forces took almost continuous enemy sniper fire. Though there is no conclusive evidence, a number of commanders remarked that the highly accurate fire was due to the possibility that the snipers were trained for that mission and may have used telescopic sights. It was noted that enemy snipers did use tracer rounds to make corrections while firing.

e. The Combat Engineer Vehicle (CEV), Company A, 65th Engineer Battalion successfully used several new techniques during CLIFF DWELLER IV. (1) The CEV devised a plan to afford more protection for the southernmost blocking position. Arriving at this position on 8 January, the vehicle commander used the CEV blade to build a berm 3-4 feet high between tanks to protect the Inf. This not only gave the

Infantry a berm in front, but also a depression behind the berm for further protection. On 11 January the CEV leveled the berm, filling in all holes after the blocking force were returning to their respective bases of operation. (2) In order to bring more destructive fires against the enemy with its 165mm demolition projector, the CEV Cmdr noted locations of caves during the day and fired at them at night using a range card system. 3 secondary explosions were achieved by using this method. Further damage assessment to enemy troops or equipment was not possible because of the destructive power of the 165mm demolition projector. It was the only weapon available during the op capable of destroying granite caves on Nui Ba Den. (3) It was noticed that by placing a red filter on a flashlight and shining it in the direction to be observed by starlight scope, observation was made much easier because the red light aided in setting objects out more plainly and clearly. (4) A starlight scope was used successfully with an M-119 periscope on occasion for spotting movement on the mountain at night.

f. One advantage of the rocky terrain was that it offered overhead protection for US troops against "splash" from friendly supporting fires. However, the danger area of "splash" was increased 2 to 3 times because of indirect fire rounds impacting on the hard granite rocks. Not only shrapnel from the munitions endangered US forces, but also the debris caused by a splintering of rocks. Because of the closeness of contacts, supporting fires were at times brought within a short distance from US forces on the mountain. Some US soldiers were wounded by this "splash".

**Tomahawk KIAs during the rest of January include : David H. Stoppelwerth of Alpha Co on 18 January; and Oscar F. Rodriguez of Alpha Co on 19 January**

\* \* \* \* \*

*emails*

*August 28, 2002*

**INTRODUCTION**

*I am Dave H, I was first assigned to the **4th Battalion, 23rd Infantry (Mech)** in late January 1970 where I served as S-3 Air for a week at FSB Rawlings near in Nui Ba Den, the "Black Virgin Mountain." Then I was assigned as 3rd Platoon Leader of B Co. for a couple of weeks after which I took over from CPT Drew as commanding officer of B Company. When the 25th Infantry Division went into Cambodia "B" Company minus a platoon stayed in South Vietnam to secure the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment Fire Support Base for a week or so. Then we were assigned to provide security for an engineer "Rome Plow operation" in the northern section of III Corp in the middle of the 25th ARVN Division's AO (Area of Operations). We were so far out that the only US Artillery who could support us was a single 175mm Battery. I was briefed on the enemy situation, which included a North Vietnamese Army regiment and several smaller battalion, and separate Company-sized units, which were reported to be located or active in the region we were assigned to "plow."*

## **BUDDHA'S BIRTHDAY CEASEFIRE**

*We had been tearing up jungle for about a week to 10 days and had cleared an area about one kilometer wide along the highway by three kilometers deep West of the highway. I was informed via radio by higher headquarters that we would observe a ceasefire to honor Buddha's Birthday. We were to maintain security but not fire unless fired upon. That evening I took, what I deemed, appropriate action by tactically locating two large ambush patrols along what I believed were the most likely avenues of approach at the North and South ends of the Rome Plow cut along the highway. The AP (ambush patrol) at the North end was manned by a Popular Force Company of about 20 irregulars commanded by a 40+ year-old South Vietnamese Lieutenant and was assigned under my command to replace my detached first platoon. The AP at the South end of the cut was my second platoon without their tracks. I relocated our night laager position with the engineers, their tractors, and equipment located at the center of our night laager site. I had them push up a rough berm for protection and placed my company's armored personnel carriers within the berm and protected with RPG screens.*

*Shortly after dark the Northern AP, manned by the PF company, reported large numbers of heavily armed uniformed NVA soldiers marching south four-abreast down the highway. I called to the soldier manning the "Big-Eye," a very large starlight scope, who confirmed the sighting. I questioned the PF commander about the strength and weaponry of the NVA and he kept repeating "many many" and "a hundred."*

*I radioed the patrol leader not to initiate contact with the enemy and reported the situation to my operational higher headquarters a US Army major who was the regional advisor to the ARVN. He ordered not to engage the enemy. I remarked that the heavily armed force was moving toward a large village a few clicks south and suggested that he radio them a warning. He responded that the village was in no danger since it was "Buddha's Birthday and we were in the middle of a ceasefire. A while later the southern AP radioed a report of large numbers of heavily armed (RPGs and RPDs) NVA soldiers marching South four-abreast down the highway and continuing South past their position. The PF patrol leader reported the column was still marching past his position! (The NVA column was more than a kilometer long! Many, many indeed).*

*Again, I radioed the Regional ARVN advisor about the enormous size and armament of this enemy force and reasserted my suggestion to warn the village. He assured me that the enemy troops were merely passing through the area in order to join with their friends in celebrating Buddha's birthday and that they would not violate the ceasefire.*

*About 2300 hrs the night sky south of our position burst into flames as the report of mortars, rocket propelled grenades and machine gunfire ripped through the silence of the night. Again I radioed Regional ARVN advisor to report that it appear the village south of us was under siege. He said he would call them on the radio. After about 20 to 30 minutes the firing subsided and the Regional ARVN advisor radioed to inform me that he had been unsuccessful in trying to contact the village to which I suggested it might be because they were all dead! He, however, attributed the communications failure to "atmospherics." At about 0100 hrs the south AP called saying the NVA were back and headed north. A moment later the northern AP*

radioed that's a new heavily armed force was approaching from the north. Again, I ordered both AP to hold their fire. I ordered a "stand to" 100% alert and had two .50 caliber Browning Heavy Barreled machine gun ground mounted on opposite sides of the night laager position to provide grazing fire across the side facing the highway. I had limiting stakes set to prevent firing into our own troops in the ambush positions.

I again radioed a report to the Regional ARVN advisor telling him I expected an attack on our laager position within the hour and requested a "Night Hawk" gunship and other air support on standby alert. He said "No. No. No. And don't shoot." I checked the scene through the giant starlight scope and noted the two groups of NVA, those which had originally pass by us on their way south and a equal number of fresh troops, heavily loaded with RPGs, met at the middle of the highway and began to tactically deploy toward our laager position. I reported these developments to the Regional ARVN advisor and reiterated my request for immediate air support. He asked if they were shooting at us and when I responded, no, that they were still out of range for their RPGs he again denied my request for air support and ordered me not to initiate contact. I told him he was a stupid son-of-a bitch. I also told him to warn any aircraft in the area that I was about to open fire with my organic 81-millimeter mortars. When he ordered me not to engage the enemy I told him to fuck himself.

I radioed my two ambush patrols to get down because I was about to open fire on the advancing NVA. I also told them not to begin firing because I could not leave the engineers and their equipment to come to reinforce them. When the lead elements of the NVA were in the Rome Plow cut about 1,000 meter from our position I engaged them with my mortars. We started with all three tubes firing high explosive rounds set at "quick" for maximum burst effect. After six rounds from each tube in rapid succession I had one tube switch to firing illumination rounds set to burst above the highway and behind the enemy so as to silhouette them. The other two tubes began dropping HE rounds at a sustainable rate of about four rounds per minute with the mortar platoon FO standing at the berm directly adjusting both the HE and illumination fire.

The mortar fire was effective but did not stop the enemy's advance. When they got within 500 meters of our laager I instructed the two ground mounted caliber .50s to open up and rake the field slowly swinging their gun barrels between the limiting stakes. The NVA faltered at the fearsome toll which the 50's and mortars was taking upon their ranks but they did not stop. When the lead elements of the NVA formation got within 200 meters of our position I warned our AP to hunker down and ordered a "mad minute" with everyone in the night laager position firing their individual weapons for one minute. That devastating fire broke the NVAs will. They halted their advance and began to withdraw. I kept the company on full alert but did not pursue the retreating enemy force since my mission was to secure the engineer unit. A "Night Hawk," C-130 fixed wing gunship, arrived on station about a half hour later, dropping flairs and harassing the stragglers from the retreating enemy force.

The following morning, the Deputy Commander of the 25 Infantry Division, an Artillery full colonel, flew in and questioned me about the events of the proceeding night. After the interview he relieved me of command and ordered me to Cu Chi Base Camp. Upon arrival at Cu Chi I reported to the 3rd Brigade commander who interviewed me about the incident and sent me to clean up and report to him again the next morning. I did as he ordered and after two subsequent meeting where he

*asked me to repeat the sequence of events he reassigned me to the 2nd Bn27th Infantry saying I "should fit in fine with the Wolfhound cause they're the fightin'est sons-a-bitches in Vietnam."*

*RECAP: During the night of Buddha's Birthday Ceasefire, 1970, while securing the Rome Plow Operation, Bravo company engaged a formation of several hundred uniformed North Vietnamese Army regulars armed with RPG and light machine gun that were deploying*

*to attack our laager position. We sustained no casualties while inflicting serious damage to the NVA but I was relieved of command the next morning and sent to the 25th Division rear in Cu Chi for violating the ceasefire. Four days later I was given a platoon in C/2/27th Wolfhounds.*

*A week after that I took over B Co 2/27 which I commanded until November 10, 1970, when the unit "stood down" in preparation for return to Schofield Barracks Hawaii.*

*DH*

*Jan 29, 04*

*Bob -- sounds as if everyone was lucky that day. That reminds me of something that happened in RECON in 1970. This is very hazy and Dave M. or Ranger Dan if you remember it different by all means speak up. RECON was in a night defensive position right up against either rubber plantations or jungle. We were all set up for the night. Guards posted on the tracks and everything was quiet.*

*Well, someone went out front to take a dump. I don't know who it was. Whoever it was made a lot of noise, not a good thing to do in front of a guard position armed with a 50 cal. Another guy had put down the surf board and crawled up there to sleep. Well, the guard heard the noise the guy asleep heard the noise and stood up on the surf board. I think you can imagine what happened. The guard shot our own man on the surf board. I believe the guard had only been in the RECON a couple of days and was immediately transferred out for his own safety. Like I said this is very hazy in this chemo brain of mine so if anyone saw it different please correct me.  
BILL BATEMAN RECON 70-71*

*Feb 28, 05*

*Glenn:*

*Captain Terry (Terrence) O'Hara was last living in Ohio as recently as 5 years ago. I don't know if anyone has tried to contact him recently. Regarding his "Nom de guerre" -- Captain America -- some folks started to use that name either during or immediately after the 15-17 March 70 battle at the North East side of the Mountain. During that period, with the exception of his RTO and driver, I guess I spent the most time near him. His actions in those days, in the face of deadly and accurate sniper fire, can only be characterized as both incredibly brave and incredibly reckless. He continuously (not intermittently -- I mean ALWAYS) remained exposed to the enemy and his fire (.51 cal, RPG, mortar, AK, etc) while directing the platoons via radio and coordinating with Battalion on the radio. He acted as though he was invincible; unable to be hurt; like a caped crusader. Like Captain America. He finally did get*

*shot in the hand on either day one or two, but -- like the Eveready Bunny --- he just kept going, and going and going. The nickname seemed to stick because he always,*

*and I mean always, went out of his way to find Contact --- much to the chagrin of the lead elements.*

*These are only my views, Cotton. I left Charlie Company just a few days before the Cambodian move. I have heard some great stories about O'Hara during that period. You may want to talk to others who were there (Trobough, Kammerer, Ross Ciccarello, and Ernie Simpson, Vic Letchman, and others.) to get their characterizations. I believe all but Ross will attend the Nashville reunion.*

*Stay well.*

*JM*

*Feb 28, 05*

*--- John, do you remember the 2Lt. FO name. Me and my Sq. Leader Sgt. Rich Wych were in the bomb crater next to them. I remember he was blonde and a real starched stiff kinda guy. O'Hara brought his track up and picked us up. When we were pulling away he was hit in the face by a ricochet off the top of the track. This was in the rocky saddle between Nui Ba Den and Nui Cau. That day I realized what the saying "Shooting Fish In A Barrel" meant.*

*John Baker*

*Feb 28, 05*

*John:*

*You're right. The 2LT was a blonde-headed guy that wasn't around very long. I forget his name, but I am sure that Ross would remember it. And again you are right on. It was at the base of the saddle between Nui Cau and Nui Ba Den. This was like shooting fish in a barrel --- and we were the fish. Those three days were the original "Bad Days at Black Rock".*

*JM*

*Mar 1, 05*

*Cotton:*

*I was not involved with the planning of this "Sweep". It was obviously done at battalion (in coordination with the S-2 and S-3) and passed down to Charlie company. After O'Hara received his Alert Order, I was involved in the Situation and Operation briefing by the S-3. It was short, normal, routine and was intended to be yet another "sweep"/reconnaissance against yet another piece of the mountain. So, my recollection is that it was just another routine "milk run" against the hill in company force. It didn't turn out that way. It was not as bad as the June 6, 69 (and the following 30 days) venture into Tay Ninh City, but it was pretty darn "sporty". No -- - It was just plain bad. The guys that really took it in the shorts were the 2 companies of the 22nd Inf that were airlifted to the Nui Cau saddle with one day of food and water, and had to be rescued on the afternoon of day three. Yet another story.*

*JM*



Feb 15, 05

John asked what platoon "Cotton" was in. 4th platoon, 44 track, You know, the one with more radio antenna than Battalion Command. Sgt. Seaman wanted to be able to listen in on Company, Battalion, Artillery, and anything coming over from the Pentagon. We had Commo out the wazoo! 44 was the only track in the Company that pulled a trailer.

Question for John Mohler; One hot dry dusty day in Tay Ninh Province, on a rift up the slope of Nui Ba Den, past the banana groves, did I not see you take a 51 cal round right in the chest, or is that just something I dreamed up?  
Glenn C.

Feb 15, 05

Glenn:

Your memory of me on that rift above the banana grove is ALMOST correct. I took a .51 cal in the front of my helmet as I was bending forward to look at my map and compass. It knocked me backwards about 20 feet and down the hill, and almost ripped my head off. But alas, because I was bending forward, the bullet ricocheted off of my helmet. As a result of the impact, I was bleeding from my nose and ears, but no real wounds. I think I was with the third platoon bunch at the time. After everyone realized that I was still quite alive, but somewhat punch drunk, they all laughed and we proceeded up the hill. I looked allot worse off than I really was. I seem to vaguely remember that at some point the CO sent someone up from the 4.2 platoon (an FO) to relieve me. I was truly grateful for the break.

As for my trusty, dented helmet, It stayed with me throughout the remainder of my tour. It came in handy once again on 15 March on the back side of the Mountain when it took yet another bullet as I was doing the same thing (bending over, reading map coordinates and calling in Arty), but I finally lost it near Snoul, Cambodia in late May 1970. I had hoped to bring it home as a souvenir.

Many thanks for remembering, T was an interesting day.

John

Feb 17, 09

John -- Your deduction is correct, in the head by a sniper. It was believed that he had his head up just outside of the lid to see where to move to with his seat blocked. Yes, he was my friend and in my eyes had saved our asses in times when the only thing that was there to get behind was the track. BS-V is the Bronze Star with V device (for valor.) There were actually many that received that award that day, I was one, but we got them later (listed May 11, 1970 Tropic Lightning News), I believe at Rawlins. I have tried to post a picture on this site, I have one of him ( I got this somewhere on this site or somewhere) with an LT that I can't remember the name and a couple of Chieu Hoi's, one of which was named Phouc.

Darrell

Feb 17, 09

Many thanks for your response. Since Garcia was driving a track -- and by deduction, was shot in the head by sniper fire -- he could not have been one of the

*alpha guys that helped rescue Ross Cicarello and his 2LT. But, just the same, he was a frigging hero.*

*John*

*Feb 28, 05*

*--- John, do you remember the 2Lt. FO [name? – ed] . Me and my Sq. Ldr. Sgt. Rich Wych were in the bomb crater next to them. I remember he was blonde and a real starched stiff kinda guy. O'Hara brought his track up and picked us up. When we were pulling away he was hit in the face by a ricochet off the top of the track. This was in the rocky saddle between Nui Ba Dinh And Nui Cau. That day I realized what the saying "Shooting Fish In A Barrel" meant.*

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*JM*

*Mar 2, 2005*

*Rick - Thanks for the "FO Helper. On this map I would estimate the location when Ross Ciccarello and His 2LT were pinned on day one as: coordinates 605279.*

*Eventually, after the Battalion, 22nd Infantry, and other Elements joined The battle area stretched approximately from: 6122274 to 587300. When the remaining elements of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Inf finally reached the base of the Mountain early afternoon of day three, they gathered in an area whose center point is approximately 603280. Charlie company tracks, manned strictly by volunteers (another story) and Captain O'Hara, pulled up to the base of the mountain on line; and just at the edge of the elephant grass (out in the open), and about 100 meters from the base of the hill, shut*

off all engines, and were ordered not to return fire from the mountain under any condition ---- because the 22nd Infantry guys were both between the Charlie company tracks and were intermingled with the bad guys. The 22 Inf guys (by then, mostly out of ammo, food and water), had to run the 100 meters of open ground from the rocks at the mountain base to the Charlie company tracks --- all the while under fire from bad guys. Couple this even with multiple batteries of Arty hitting the side of the hill above at the same time. UNFORGETTABLE!!!!!!!!!!

While we took casualties during those three days, the leg companies from the 22<sup>nd</sup> Inf really took it in the shorts.

Finally, the 105MM battery that fired beehive was located within the Hunter compound.

These are my faulty recollections after 35 years this month. Thanks or the map aids, young man.

JM

Mar 3, 05

Glenn:

Two guys that fit your description were both with third platoon, and probably came in after 6 June 69 -- and were still there when I was reassigned in May 70. Both were absolutely wild and crazy. Both were absolute warriors; both were fine, fine leaders and NCOs.

(1) Third platoon Sgt, SSG Terry Trobough. Remained in the Army and retired a Command Sergeant Major. He will attend the Nashville reunion.

(2) Third platoon Squad Leader, SGT Hermann Renfro. Now a commercial real estate developer in Illinois or Indiana.

(3) another third platoon guy, who was not an NCO at the time I left, is Bobby Kammerer from Duncan Oklahoma. He also will attend the Nashville reunion.

These guys were wild warriors. Any names ring a bell?

JM

Jan 25, 08

Wayne, when I came in country Doug Turner was platoon leader in 1st. Plt. Robert Schmidt replaced him. Then Gary Mann and then William Fischer. John Aljets was CO. Terry O'Hara replaced him sometime in Feb. or March. He was wounded week or two prior to Cambodia and Robert Schmidt replaced him. Schmidt was wounded in Cambodia and I believe O'Hara came back for a short while and was wounded again. Then it was Mann and whoever was standing that day until Fischer became CO. Me and a guy was talking at a C Co. reunion, from Cambodia on it was like nobody was in charge. That's how I remember it.

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*again. Then it was Mann and whoever was standing that day until Fischer became CO. Me and a guy was talking at a C Co. reunion, from Cambodia on it was like nobody was in charge. That's how I remember it.*

*John Baker*

*Dec 21, 09*

*I know that Alpha lost at least three during my short time with the 4/23. Two to mines, both from 2nd Plt. Mike Brooks and I were on one and the other was about twenty feet behind me while we were dismounted. Both of those were in Nam. In Cambodia, the track in front of us was hit by an RPG. I think it was from 1st Plt. Brownie*

\* \* \* \* \*

From 25<sup>th</sup> Inf Division Quarterly Report and Lessons Learned Period ending 30 April 1970.

1. (C) OPS: Significant Activities.

a. General: During the previous qtr. [last quarter 1969] the 25th Infantry Division and 3rd Brigade, 9th Infantry Division successfully forced the enemy to continually postpone his Winter/Spring offensive. Through aggressive preemptive ops enemy elements were forced to continue functioning in small units, unable to mount a significant offensive. During this period 25th Infantry Division ops (to include 3rd Brigade, 9th Infantry Div) accounted for 3,478 enemy eliminated including enemy KIA, captured, and rallying (Hoi Chanh) to US. Forces. 1st Brigade hand preempted all enemy attempts to initiate an offensive in Tay Ninh Province, prevented the enemy from freely using the cave-strewn slopes of Nui Ba Den as a refuge and stop-over point for infiltration groups, and successfully restricted enemy infiltration into Tay Ninh Province from Cambodia . The enemy was forced to resort to attacks by fire as his primary offensive tactic."

\* \* \* \* \*

"1st Brigade operated in Tay Ninh Province with four infantry battalions and was responsible for security on Highways 22 and 26, for combined operations with South Vietnamese units around Tay Ninh City and for coverage of the area around Nui Ba Den. The 1st Brigade was given the mission of conducting airmobile, recon, denial, and ambush missions throughout the area of ops, and for eagle float ops with the U.S. Navy on the Vam Co Dong River; continuing participation in the combined US/RF/PF defense of Tay Ninh City; preparing to insert and extract Ranger teams and install sensor devices in conjunction with and in support of Division n programs, and continuing the pacification effort in conjunction with GVN forces in Phu Khuong, Phuoc Ninh, Hieu Thien and Khiem Hanh Districts.

"1st Brigade was composed of 2nd Bn, 34th Armor (-); 3rd Bn, 22nd Inf; 4th Bn, 9th Inf; and **4th Bn (Mech), 23rd Inf**. The 1st Bde was supported by 7th Bn, 11th Arty.

On 2 February, the largest action occurred in 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade AO, 4 kilometers west-northwest of the Ben Cui Rubber Plantation (XT401463). Snipers from **Co C, 4th Bn (Mech), 23rd Infantry** engaged six enemy with organic weapons, Night Hawk helo and three Artillery batteries (422 rounds) at 1900 hrs, resulting in six enemy KIA. There were no U.S. casualties from enemy return fire of small arms, automatic weapons, M79 grenade launchers and HGs. Firing ceased at 1915 hours.

**P. Wiesnefski** of **Bravo Company** was **KIA** on 26 February.

"On 2 March 1970, Task Force Two (2nd Brigade, 25th Infantry Division became OPCON to Commander, II Field Forces Vietnam (See Annex A, Task Organization).

With the redeployment of 1st Infantry Division to United States, the AO of 25th Infantry Division became extended. To facilitate command/control over this AO, II FFV took operational control of the 2nd Brigade, 25th Infantry Division." [1st Bn 5th Mech was also re-assigned 1st Brigade at this time.] "Enemy activity within the 1st Brigade area of operations continued at a low level during the third week of March.

In five separate contacts, 1st Brigade forces KIA 57 enemy and captured one prisoner-of-war. [Seems to be contradicted immediately in report.- nra]

At 1115 hrs on 2 March, the **Scout Platoon, 4th Bn (Mech), 23rd Infantry**, located a cache 3.5 k. northwest of the Ben Cui Rubber Plantation (XT409469). Evac'd were two M-16 rifles, three SKS rifles, nine M-16 magazines and five lbs of docs. The captured documents identified local force elements of Tay Ninh Prov. No tactical information was obtained.

**James D. Presson** of D Co on was KIA on 6 March.

At 0450 hrs on 12 Mar a combat patrol from **Co A, 4th Bn (Mech), 23rd Inf**, located 3 km. SW of Nui Ba Den (XT258542), engaged an est two enemy squads. Contact was lost at 0510 hrs. Three enemy were KIA by organic weapons and Arty fire..

One wounded POW captured sweeping contact area. Eight Chicom HGs, one AK47, and misc web gear were evac'd. At 0555 hrs, the engaged and KIA one enemy with SA and AWs fire. One AK47 rifle was evac'd along with misc web gear.

At 1022 hrs on 15 March, **Charlie Co 4-23 Inf (Mech)**, approx 600 meters northeast of the mountain (XT280610), received SA and RPG fire from an unknown number of enemy. One U.S. soldier was wounded. U.S. forces returned fire with organic weapons, helo gunships and artillery with unknown results. Contact was lost at 1337 hrs. "The **4th Battalion (Mech), 23rd Infantry** accounted for 56 enemy dead in a two-day op on Nui Ba Den and just northeast of the mountain."

**Alpha Co 4-23 Inf (Mech)** received SA fire from an unknown number of enemy at 1100 hrs 2.8 km NE of the **C/4-23 Inf (M)** contact, at (XT282612). Ten U.S. were IA. U.S. forces returned fire with organic weapons, helo gunships, arty, CS drops and TAC AIR strikes resulted in 31 enemy KIA. Contact was lost at 1730 hours. At 1900 hours, **Alpha 4-23 Inf (Mech)** received SA fire resulting in one [appears as two, see below – ed.] U.S. soldiers KIA. Contact was lost at 1905 hrs.

**Killed in Action were: Isidro Garcia and Eddie S. Randall, Jr. both of Alpha Co.**

"At 1010 hrs on 16 March, Troop D, 3rd Squadron, 4th Cavalry and **Alpha 4-23 Infantry (Mech)** were inserted in reaction to intelligence to a target on the "Saddle" area of Nui Ba Den (XT285600). An LOH received small arms ground fire resulting in moderate damage to the LOH but no casualties. The fire was returned with organic weapons and artillery. (For further information see Op Report-Lessons Learned, 372d Radio Research Co, 303d Radio Research Bn, for the corresponding period). Later at 1338 hours, **Alpha and Delta Company, 4<sup>th</sup> of the 23rd Inf (Mech)** received small arms and rocket propelled grenade fire from an unknown number of enemy vicinity XT280600. U.S. forces returned fire with organic weapons, helo gunships, and TAC AIR strikes with unknown results. An AH1G Cobra gunship supporting the **4-23 Inf (Mech)** contact received heavy small arms fire at 1400 hours and crashed. **Alpha Co/4<sup>th</sup> Bn 23rd Inf (Mech)** swept the contact area at 1430 hours and located ten enemy KIA vicinity of XT285605. At 1527 hours, **Charlie 4-23 Inf (Mech)** received small arms fire from an unknown number of enemy vicinity XT281615. Two U.S. were KIA and six wounded. U.S. forces returned fire with organic weapons, a helo light fire team, TAC AIR strikes, and artillery resulting in 15 enemy KIA. Contact was lost at 1845 hrs." **Louis C. Emery** of C Co was killed in action this day.

On 19 March in a shelling incident one U.S. soldier was wounded when Co C, 4th Bn (Mech), 23rd Inf received 10 mortar rds at 0855 hrs. The Co was located 4.5 k. N.E. of Trang Sup (XT305583)

**Clarence J. Carson Jr. and Robert J. Locket both of A Co were Killed in Action on 5 April.**

\* \* \* \* \*

*Mar 16, 09*

*Darrell: -- My question is merely out of continued interest for what occurred that day. What Company was Mr. Garcia with?????? I can relate the following memories of that day:*

*-During the fight on 15 March, Charlie company was shifted to the left (as you face the Mountain).*

*-I think Alpha or HQ moved in to our right (can't be sure after all these years). There were also two flame tracks;*

*-When Charlie was shifted to the left, we still had a two man FO team out in front -- stranded and surrounded. A 2nd LT and Sp 4 Ross Cicarello, both slightly wounded;*

*-While we searching for them, they were joined by a couple of guys from the unit that moved into our right -- and to their immediate front;*

*-One of those guys became KIA while he was with or near the two-man FO team. They/we never learned his name.*

*-We think that the guy was with the unit that moved in on the right of Charlie, with two flame tracks.*

*Could Mr. Garcia have been with that unit to the right of Charlie????? ????*



*not long after the platoon crossed over the bridge(1-2 minutes). I could hear the tracks had stopped, and at the same time spotted movement coming across in the opposite direction. The cajones were big on this guy. I sighted along the barrel of my 16 to the beltline of the little man after alerting the rest of the patrol and was waiting for his buddies to appear. Had the slack out of the trigger and he bends over to lay something down. Was it a mine or claymore? After straightening out he heads back across the bridge. I came so close to pulling the trigger. It was Revier, after he crossed over the bridge he radios to say he had left a starlight scope on the our side of the bridge, after he returned from his trip across the bridge. Thought we might need it. I wanted to chase after and shoot him anyway for causing the adrenalin flow.*  
Dan

*And speaking of cats:*

*Jan 7, 2004*

*Subj: Cat House Owned in Tay Ninh*

*Wow, for people usually willing to write pages about their experiences, anecdotes, folklore, telling tales on each other, etc -- there's a pretty deafening silence about this personal Tay Ninh Cat House.*

*Surely any Statutes of Limitations have run out . . .*

*Or have they???*

*Neil*

*Jan 7, 2004*

*LMAO!!*

*You noticed that too, huh?*

*I'm here to tell you....*

*When Doug told me about it, I confronted Smitty with it at the reunion, all I got was a blank stare and a real red face..*

*Of course Steve's wife was standing close by so that might account for him mumbling "I don't want to talk about it." He especially changed the subject when I asked about the AK-47..*

*I can only imagine, knowing some of the unspeakable escapades I witnessed over there. But, I think there is some really meaty tales to come from this episode..*

*LMAO!!!*

*Come on guys!*

*History awaits, with baited breath for this chapter of our proud unit history..It can't be any more embarrassing than trying to run the air boat on dry land.. huh Farmer?*

*Rick*

*Jan 7, 2004*

*Subj: Cat house owned in Tay Ninh*

*Come on you guys the battalion commander is listening.*

*I looked at it as part of my responsibilities. The platoon SSG had it before me and SGT Steve Smith had it after me. LOL. I was just doing my job. I'm not sure I had the correct MOS for it but I learned. I didn't even know it existed until I got to CRIP.*

*Doug*



Jan 9, 2004

*This is my first post as I've just joined this site. It certainly has jogged the memory. Just the other day the name of Capt. Phillip's replacement came to my mind and this morning I found it in some Dec. 2003 posts by Col. Neilson.*

*Capt. Lincoln replaced Capt Phillips as CO of Charlie Co. I can picture his face and but the only thing that comes to mind was that, I think, his father was a Col. that taught Military History at West Point and was about to or did retire. I think Capt. Lincoln & I had a conversation about that and the Army had promoted his father to Brig. Gen. just as he had retired. Does that ring true to you Col. Neilson?*

*I felt sorry for Lincoln as Capt Phillips had been highly regarded by the guys and his would have been a hard act to follow. There was a well-attended memorial service for Capt Lincoln in the chapel at Tay Ninh. I think it was conducted by Chaplain Able or Able, the Catholic chaplain and a tall thin black chaplain, I believe a Baptist, whose name I can't recall. He was a nice fellow and, if I recall, relatively soft spoken?*

*As far as I know Capt Lincoln was a good fellow. Don't believe I was there for any contact while he was the CO of Charlie. Think the Battle of Tay Ninh was quieting down about that time.*

*Best to You All,  
Carl G. Berning*

Jan 9, 2004

*Now that I'm back again I can shed some light on the discussion about the alleged home belonging to certain members of CRIP. CRIP was involved in many activities in 1970, some of which were legitimate. Somewhere along the line the home in question came under the ownership of SSgt Conn. When SSgt Conn DEROS I was home on leave due to my brothers illness. When I went back to Nam the guys informed me that SSgt Conn had given the house to me. I never went back to see it because we were visiting in Cambodia and never made it back to that part of Tay Ninh. I guess in theory I still own it.*

*I do not remember all that went on there. As far as the AK-47 goes, SSgt C. passed it on to me, and because I am smarter than Doug sometimes, I sold it for 50 bucks to Sgt L. from Flame Platoon. And that's the rest of the story.  
Smitty R.*

\* \* \* \* \*

Segue to Cambodia Operations:

In mid-1970 a House Select Subcommittee was formed to study and report to the Congress on the overall situation of the US in Southeast Asia from a number of military and political perspectives [but mostly political – ed.] . Their Report contains some tidy summaries that may be of some use to quote at this point:

“In recent months the North Vietnamese and Vietcong have avoided big-unit offensive operations indicative of a more or less conventional war. Instead. They have reverted to the “protracted war” approach of the guerrilla, as well as terrorist attacks. Some of their regular or Main Force regimental units apparently are being broken down into numerous “local force” units of company-size or less. This is not to say they are ineffective. To the contrary, one must expect renewed and increased small-scale offensive actions against small outposts and hamlets, and increased terrorists attacks in cities and the countryside. This is in fact happening at the present time. (p.5)

“To most of the committee, especially those of us who have been in Southeast Asia on previous occasions, significant gains seem to have been made in the all-important pacification program. Village and hamlet security was better than most of us expected, as also was the security of travel by road throughout much of the countryside, at least in daytime.

“As best evidence of this, committee members traveled by highway singly and in groups – much of the time without military escort – in nearly every area of South Vietnam, and moved at will in numerous villages and hamlets where the residents seemed to be living fairly normal lives. (p.8)

“The elements of ultimate success are in place in South Vietnam. Whether that success is achieved, however, will depend much more on what the South Vietnamese are willing to do for themselves than on what the US will do for them. Any assistance we furnish should be on terms and under conditions that will stimulate the maximum self-help effort by the South Vietnamese people and their government. (p.75) “It seems to me that the important conclusion drawn from the trip is related to the feasibility of applying the Nixon doctrine; this was expressed in Guam, and was incorporated in the President’s report to the congress on February 18, 1970 . . .

The Administration’s position is based on the United States:

- Keeping all its treaty commitments.
- Providing a shield against threats by a nuclear power to the freedom a nation allied with us or a notion whose survival we consider vital to our security . . .
- Providing military and economic assistance when requested and as appropriate in cases of other types of aggression..
- However the United States looks to the nation directly threatened to assume the primary responsibility manpower for its defense. This basic policy of the Administration is consistent with the national policy expressed in the United States Public Law as the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, amended thru 1969. (p. 80, by Rep Keith, Mass.) (p. 80)”

CAMBODIA background briefing by Mr. Jerry Benet before the committee departed:

“(He gave a general background to 1965.) Concerning sanctuaries, in 1967, the Viet Cong (VC) and North Vietnamese Army (NVA) started supplying weapons through Cambodia through Sihanoukville and from the north. This continued as Sihanouk attempted to play all sides. Theory: He permitted this because he felt that the VC would soon win and he would be faced with an all-Communist Vietnam. He hopped his gestures would be rewarded with respect for Cambodian neutrality.

“In May 1969, Sihanouk placed an embargo on all NVA shipments through Cambodia but lifted the ban in the fall. In early March 1970, Sihanouk with a sizeable

group of his close advisors to muster support from other governments for his country's neutrality and to get Moscow and Peiking to help him secure the withdrawal of the NVA forces, then numbering about 40,000.

"The coup came while Sihanouk was still on Moscow, on March 18. The NVA Response to the ouster of Sihanouk was as follows: 1) sanctuaries were strengthened, 2) riots were incited to overthrow the Lon Nol government; these failed, 3) on April 5, the NVA switched to direct military action against Cambodian troops.

"The situation today is as follows: Cambodia and the Lon Nol government controls Phnom Penh, central Cambodia. and southwest Cambodia." (p. 88 Background Briefings)

\* \* \* \* \*

## **NEW CAMPAIGN SANCTUARY COUNTEROFFENSIVE 1 May 1970 – 30 Jun 1970**

Many histories refer to this period as "Cambodia", "Cambodian Incursion", or "Border Battles."

From Official Reports / Records

OPERATIONS: Significant Activities (Previous Quarter Summary).

A. General: The quarter from 1 May to 31 July 1970 was highlighted by the Cambodian cross-border ops directed by President Nixon on 1 May 1970. The 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigades of the 9<sup>th</sup> Inf Division and all maneuver battalions of the 25<sup>th</sup> Inf Division played an integral part in the attack. Although limited in time and restricted geographically, the Division was successful in destroying enemy supply points, training sites and base areas along the Cambodian border. Accomplishing this mission greatly reduced enemy offensive capabilities in Military Region III, SRVN. Additionally, the enemy suffered significant personnel losses. A total of 1075 enemy were killed, 54 captured and 22 Hoi Chanh received by 25<sup>th</sup> Inf Division during the nearly 2 month-long ops. Consequently, the enemy was forced to move personnel and supply bases deeper into Cambodia and considerable time and effort has been required to reconstitute them, and personnel intended by the enemy for offensive action have been diverted to supply and support service.

1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division began Operation TOAN THANG 44 on 6 May with an attack into Base Area 354, which encompassed the border region called the Dog's Face. The 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade operated there until 15 May when Op TOAN THANG 43 Phase III began in which 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade forces were sent into Base Area 353 around the Fishhook Region. Op TOAN THANG 43 Phase III lasted until 30 Jun when all US units pulled out of Cambodia. 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, in both ops, dealt the enemy a severe blow as many tons of food, clothing, medical supplies, weapons and munitions were captured or destroyed. During the last month of the quarter, First Brigade was assigned to a new AO in north central Tay Ninh and northwest Binh Long Provinces and continued TOAN THANG IV, concentrating on interdicting enemy infiltration from

Cambodia and destroying enemy bases along the border. Tay Ninh Base Camp and the surrounding area, the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade's AO before the Cambodian Operation was turned over to the control of the 25<sup>th</sup> ARVN Division during July, another indication of the success of the Vietnamization Program.

Second Brigade remained OPCON to II Field Force Vietnam until 7 May when the Brigade reverted to the control of the 25<sup>th</sup> Inf Division for ops in Cambodia. TOAN THANG 43 Phase II began on 9 May and lasted until 15 May at which time 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade joined 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade in TOAN THANG 43 Phase III until 10 June. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade (illegible) like 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade was successful in locating many enemy supply caches and captured or destroyed tons of enemy food and equipment. During the month of July, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade assumed control of a new AO around Xuan Loc in Long Khanh and Phuoc Tuy Provinces and resumed TOAN THANG IV, concentrating on the destruction of the enemy and his supplies. 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade elements continued to assist in the pacification program in their new AO.

According to the 1970 MACV Command History, the US intention was, in III CTZ, "Regular forces would be committed primarily to mobilize operations against enemy forces, base areas, lines of communication, and logistic systems in III CTZ and other enemy forces which might invade across the Laotian and Cambodian border. Emphasis was to be placed . . . opening and protecting the road, rail, and water LOCs, particularly Routes 1, 4, 13, 15, 20, and 22, the Saigon-Bien Hoa highway, and the Saigon shipping channel . . ."

**OP TOAN THANG 43** in conjunction with **Bold Lancer I** (4 May – 14 May 70) opened US entry into Cambodia. On 29 April a force including 3d Brigade 1<sup>st</sup> Air Cavalry Div; 2/34th Armor (-); 2/47th Infantry (M); ARVN 3d Airborne Brigade; and US 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment entered around Fishhook Area. The 25<sup>th</sup> Division comprised 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade (3<sup>rd</sup>/22<sup>nd</sup> Inf, 1<sup>st</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> Inf (M), **4<sup>th</sup>/23<sup>rd</sup> Inf (M)**, 2/12 Inf, supported by 7th Bn 11th Arty.

On 4 May, 1<sup>st</sup> Bde, assaulted two Battalions into the west of the Flat Iron. At that time 3rd Bde comprised: 2nd Bn 27th Inf, 2nd Bn 22nd (M), 2nd /77th Arty (105), 3/F/75th Inf (Rgr). The Record show 4/23rd(M) Inf Opcon to 3rd Bde. This may possibly be for one day.

On 6 May 197, 1st Brigade 25<sup>th</sup> Division with four battalions, including one mechanized, moved into Area 354 south of Dog's Head when assault helos at Cu Chi and Tay Ninh lifted off their pads and headed toward FSB Wood, just west of Thien Ngon. Here they picked up 3/22 Infantry troops to assault into enemy sanctuaries south of "The Dog's Face", Base area 354. 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade included 3/22<sup>nd</sup> Inf, 1/5<sup>th</sup> (Mech), 2/14<sup>th</sup> Infantry, and 3/22<sup>nd</sup> Infantry (Mech) supported by 65<sup>th</sup> Engineers. 11<sup>th</sup> ACR was OPCON 25<sup>th</sup> Division from 18 June to 1 July.

On 6 May, 1st Brigade 25<sup>th</sup> Inf Div including one unnamed Mech Infantry Battalion moved from northern III CTZ N of Katum into Cambodia around Tausos., Base Area 354 preceded by air strikes and artillery preparation. One infantry Battalion was

airlifted into the area, and one company of it secured a bridge for entry of two mech infantry battalions over the Rach Beng Go River, and an additional float bridge was added. One mech Bn swept ahead to the west, and the other crossed the bridge and swept ahead south on the west bank of the river. Extensive searched followed.

25<sup>th</sup> Division troops found over 270 tons of rice, killed 266 enemy, and held 41 detainees, captured bicycles, motorcycles, trucks, 221 individual and 22 crew served weapons. Troops destroyed above ground structures connected by interlocking board sidewalks. Inside were blackboards, benches, tables, mess facilities, living quarters with nearby bunkers and evidence of recent enemy activity, but the enemy was gone. He was sometimes caught in small groups running away, but he fought only if he had to.

On 14 May 1st Brigade withdrew from Base Area 354 back to RVN to regroup for operations in Base Area 353, 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division's Third Phase of Operations.

\* \* \* \* \*

*emails*

*Feb 17, 2003*

*I was with B Company, first as 3rd platoon leader then company commander, from January through Buddha's Birthday in early May 1970. Only one platoon of B company went to Cambodia initially. The rest of the company went to FSB Blackhorse to secure the 11th ARCs Fire Support Base for a few days then we provided security for a Rome Plow operation in the middle of the 25th ARVN Division's AO.*

*I don't know what happened to B Company after that. BTW I have more photographs on my web site:*

*David Howerey*

*undated*

*[a condensed version of Sgt Stephen Smith's report entitled :Sapper Attack on Kontum - June - 1970: On May 6, 1970, our entire Battalion, along with the rest of the 23th Infantry Division, invaded Cambodia. Our route into Cambodia was through Tay Nihh, West of Nui Ba Denh up the road to Katum Special Forces Camp. Part of the battalion remained at Katum as Forward Base.*

*Supply Base and FSB [Fire Support Base - ed.] 7/11 Arty and a battery of 175 or 8". A Company of the 65th Engineers (later the prime target of the sappers) were also within the FSB area.*

*The majority of the Bn went on North to the Mimot Cambodia area where we operated for the next 30 days. Different companies rotated security for the Katum Base as far as I know. After 30 days we pulled back to Katum. The battalion was aware that a Sapper Unit was in the area in wood, to the N and NE of the small base. They were aware of our daily movements, and that there was a ditch leading NNW. from about the middle of our N perimeter, and just W of the woods. The E part of the*

*N perimeter lay along an east-west section of the road joining Mimot & An Loc. At night concertina wire was laid across the road. At the junction, an engineer bunker / blockhouse was also located.*

*On 20 June, as the engineer guards went off duty, incoming rounds of 60mm mortar began hitting the center of the compound, and firing began all around. The generator was hit, and gasoline ignited. Immediately, sappers (who had approached unseen down the ditch) threw grenades into the engineer's guardhouse, killing 1 man instantly, and began cutting the wire barrier. The engineers ran NW toward an airstrip adjoining. Other engineers remained under cover from the mortar in their culvert-half shelters, arranged side-by-side, not realizing the Sappers had breached the wire. The sappers proceeded past throwing charges in each shelter, and fired one RPG at a Recon APC. A recon member was sleeping in the track, as hit in the head, and killed.*

*At the same time, Sgt Smith was on guard on top of a track near the bridge on the opposite side of the compound as the breach, was blown off but not injured. He raced to alert the CRIP platoon. They had already been organized by Sp4's Cichy and Keith & they moved immediately into the engineers area less than 100 feet away. They began hauling dead and wounded from their shelters, and then joined some others on the north berm, several of them holding a sapper at rifle point who was carrying two dead sappers over the berm. Then collapsed. Sgt Smith and some others immediately took the living sapper to the CP for questioning.*

*CRIP was ordered to search the camp for other sappers, everyone else went to the berms. No more were found inside. 105s moved to the north side and fired beehives at anyone seen escaping. Spookies appeared and laid fire all around the perimeter.*

*In the morning the cleanup of carnage continued. Whole and partial bodies and been moved to the airstrip. Engineers were cleaning up smaller remains. The APCs were lined up on the road facing northing in the direction of the attack and the area cleared of GI and Sapper bodies outside the compound. One surviving sapper opened up from the woodline, everyone took cover, and returned fire heavily. A short time later the Sapper body was brought in.*

*?*

*Jan 31, 04*

*Bill, Dave, or anybody else remember when we first went into Cambodia and the whole Bn was in a laager site? Had RPG screen all the way around the Bn. Got a few rounds came in and everyone opened up. There were a couple guys burnt pretty bad when the extra powder bags from 4-duces were ignited. Anyone know if they made it alright? Have wondered about that all these years.*

*Joe W.*

*Jan 31, 04*

*I don't know about the other companies, but A Co did. That was the first time I'd been that close to a 155. One night I drove an engineering stake in the ground behind my track and attached a gook hammock to it and the other end to the track. Next thing I knew, the 155's opened up right over my head. I looked like a cartoon with my hammock all wrapped around me!*

*Neil M*

Jan 31, 04

July 3 when I was wounded and both of my ear drums were ruptured by the explosion of a B 40 rocket. We had Arty with us I don't know for sure what size 105 or 155. They lowered their guns and fired flechette rounds. I will never forget the pain every time they fired. The concussion is tremendous. Can't imagine what it would be like on board ship firing 16" guns.

BILL BATEMAN RECON 70

Feb 3, 04

Joe, do you remember a battle that took place with one of the line companies when we were in Cambodia involving them being [strafed] by a plane. I remember that there was a bunch of us listening to our radios as the battle took place. I remember someone saying that they were being strafed by a plane from the NVA and I believe that also the COL that was flying above in his Loach Hilic. was shot down

Dave M Recon 1970

Mar 17, 06

Ricky, Bobby\

In 1970 the Flame tracks were still with HHC. I remember going out with them a couple of times when they did their burn outs, Ranger Dan probably can verify this. But I know there was times that the Flame tracks would be gone from Rawlins, and they must of worked with some of the line company's

Davey M. Recon70 Apr 26, 06

Mar 17, 06

My two cents worth. When we went into Cambodia in late May of 70. We had a flame track with Alpha company. This was a day or two after we were at the Bn. Laager. Alpha had one flame track and we were ambushed and the flame track was hit right off. And I never saw the flame tracks with us again. That was just before we moved outside Memut and into the Laager with the dozer pushed berm around us. And we had the 155's with us there.

Joe Welsh

A company Class of 70

Apr 17, 2011

Neil, Some where I have the dates and a brief journal. I'll try to find it. I can tell you we went N of Katum up to Memot and then NW. We were limited to 18 Miles past the border .I don't believe we were that far in. Somewhere after the first week of May maybe 8th or 9th. There were plenty of battles. Seemed like every day for a while. We left just short of the 30 June deadline and Took up positions at Katum. Stayed there while 11 ACR re-crossed. It took them all day to pass Katum. We patrolled night and day around Katum until the second week of July give or take a few days. We then headed into Tay Ninh and re outfitted. Then the whole battalion moved (2 days) to Xuan Loc. We went further South and broke into company size laagers.

*Moving every few days, staying N of Blackhorse and South of Xuan Loc. That's my recollection. Wayne could probably sharpen the details a little. RD ?*

*RD*

*I can tell you the photo in the yearbook for 1970 with the track all burned up happened 25 May near Memot. There were two Bravo mortar tracks and two Recon tracks heading for a B company battle midday. The first RPG went right under the LT sitting on top of that track. Went right into the ammo apparently. I remember the hair straightening out on my neck just prior to that moment. Now I don't hardly have any hair left LOL!*

*August 17, 2012*

*Curtis Oaks kind of rings a bell. But they weren't on our track out in the field. Think they stayed back in Katum when we were in Cambodia and back in Fire Base or Xuan Loc when we moved. There was Mike Brooks, Russ Shlegel, Petrick, Teddy Bear(Theodore Backowski) Myself and Bill on the track. Be great if could get him to scan those photos. The one in the year book of California Dreamin is Bill, Russ, Petrick, and Mike Brooks. Bet Auther Robinson was on the 578 recovery track, might be wrong on that though. Faces might help. LOL getting old and got CRS.*

*Joe*

\* \* \* \* \*

On 29 April, 3 combined task forces of III Corps attacked into Cambodia, TFs 225, 318, and 335. 1st Bde, 25th Inf Operated against small units in MR3 adjacent to the border.

On 4 May, the 1st Air Cavalry, 11th Armored Cavalry, and ARVN airborne Bde assaulted into the Fishhook. 1st Brigade, 25th Division entered Base Area 354 south of the Dogs Head

.On 9 May 2nd Bde 25th Div entered Base Area 707, and on 11 May moved west from there to Command and Control areas. 1st Brigade 35th Div consisted of 3/22 Inf-, 1/5th Inf. **4/23 Inf Mech**, D- 3/17th Cav, 3/27th Inf, 4/9th Inf.

On 2 June, Co c, **4/23rd (Mech)** captured 58.3 tons of rice 15 km NW Katum. (III Corps AAR)

From this point to the end of cross-border operations US units were in pursuit of withdrawing enemy. Result of operation was 1438 enemy KIA and 47 captured in MR3; 3649 KIA and 132 captured in Cambodia.

2nd Bde's [1/27<sup>th</sup> Inf, 3/4<sup>th</sup> Cav, 2/27<sup>th</sup>, 4/9<sup>th</sup> Inf, and 2/47<sup>th</sup> Inf (M)] entry into Cambodia, penetrating Base Area 707, north of the "Dog's Face." On 9 May 1970, 1/27<sup>th</sup> Inf was airlifted deep inside Cambodia while the 3/4 Cavalry secured the roadways north from the border. The following day 2/27<sup>th</sup> Inf and 4/9<sup>th</sup> Inf were airlifted north of a heavily wooded area while 3/4 Cavalry took up positions south and



west of it. The 2/47<sup>th</sup> Infantry moved into position on the east, enclosing the area. Inside was believed to be a major enemy head-quarters. As the four units closed the box, they received sporadic contact with enemy trying to escape. The units soon began to find signs the area had housed a large base camp with sophisticated material like that used for a HQs operation. 3/4th Cavalry uncovered what appeared to be the HQs of a base complex: a mimeograph machine, two generators, 86 M-1 carbines, 3 .30 caliber MGs, and 3 typewriters, 2 unused 75mm RRs with carriages, 38 cases of .30 caliber ammo, 100 rds of 81mm mortar, four cases of 3.5" rockets, four cases of Soviet mines, one 60mm mortar tube w/bipod and one .30 cal water-cooled MG. There were also 11 bicycles, 11 cases of AK-ammo, 100 rounds of 60mm mortar, nine RPG rounds, and 40 hand grenades.

In another part of the complex, 2/27 Infantry discovered a hospital complex. Large quantities of medical supplies were found in facilities similar to Bn aid stations. The search continued for another week, finding more of the same type caches, especially rice. It was found during the early phase but nothing of such quantity. Rice hauling became the new challenge for 25<sup>th</sup> Division. On 14 May 1970, about 17 miles north of Thien Ngon, C Troop 3/4th Cavalry found 170 tons packed in 220 lb bags. The next day B Troop located an additional 15 bags, each containing the same . . . Within five days, 25th Division Cavalry had collected more than 400 tons of rice. Removal was difficult because the rice was found in triple canopy jungle. Helicopters couldn't get in, and much of it was found in jungle too dense for armored personnel carriers. The rice had to be carried to clearings to be loaded on any available: trucks, APCs, tanks . . . anything going to the rear.

Phase III. 1st Brigade move northeast to Base Area 353, west of Base Area 707, where 2nd Brigade operated. The two Brigades ran massive search and reconnaissance operations over a large part of the FISH HOOK. On 17 May, 1/5<sup>th</sup> (Mech) searching a heavily wooded area found one of the war's largest communication caches, including 135 bunkers, 57 hooches, ten classrooms, and several tons of radio and electronics equipment. Continuing, they cleared an enemy hospital complex of 50 hooches, 130-150 bunkers, and three kitchens.

On 14 May, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade 25<sup>th</sup> Inf Div relieved 1<sup>st</sup> Air Cavalry Div in the west of the fishhook.

On 23 May, **George F. Fell Jr** of Alpha Company was KIA.

Phase III saw two more units, the 2/12<sup>th</sup> Infantry and **4/23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry (Mech)** enter Cambodia to replace units that had seen heavy action. **4<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Mech) /23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry** and 2//60th Infantry handled a cordon and search in the city of Memot [also spelled Mermot, Mimot - ed] by arranging a MEDCAP including games and food distribution while troops searched for suspected equipment, weapons and food caches. The residents of Memot had been told by loudspeaker that with the exception of one person per family, they were all to gather in the town square. US troops, escorted by a resident, searched each house & yard while the families elsewhere were entertained and given medical treatment. Where weapons or materiel

were found, suspicious persons were questioned. This uncovered caches of two 75mm recoilless rifles, five loaded 20mm magazines, a .30 cal rifle, 3 British rifles, 25 anti-tank mines, 188 rifle grenades and 125 lbs of medical supplies.

On 2 June, **C co 4/23<sup>rd</sup> Inf (M)** 15 km NW of Katum captured 58.3 tons of rice and destroyed 3 additional tons.

**On 8 June, 1970, Dennis Valusek of Bravo Company was killed in action. Some information, not definitive, notes it was a gunshot wound.**

**On 18 June, Lt. Earnest Hardimon Jr., Barry Tucker, Frank Zonar Jr. were KIA when a RPG struck the top of their Charlie Company track along the Cambodian Border.**

By 29 June, the last US 25th Infantry Division units pulled out of Cambodia. Contact had been heavy, comforts scarce and the monsoon season was gaining momentum. 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division Commander Major General Edward Bautz Jr. lauded the men of Tropic Lightning: "Your dedication, courage and skill have deprived the enemy of staggering quantities of weapons, ammunition, and supplies. have deprived him of the use of sanctuaries inside of Cambodia, temporarily halting and challenging the communists to undertake the costly and time consuming job of rebuilding. You have captured volumes of important documents that have provided a clearer and more detailed picture of the enemy system of command, control and support from inside Cambodia.

"A partial list of arms, ammo and equipment 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division captured and destroyed inside Cambodia includes more than 700 individual weapons, almost 150 crew-served weapons, and over 45 tons of ammo. You have captured or destroyed more than 1,500 tons of rice, more than 5,600 pounds communications equipment, 56 vehicles, and almost 1,600 lbs of documents. More than 13,000 lbs of medical supplies will never again be used to sustain the enemy. "There can be no doubt that the cross-border operations of Tropic Lightning and its sister divisions have dealt the enemy a severe blow and have brought the war much closer to a successful conclusion."

Units returning to RVN resettled themselves throughout the extended AO, including War Zone C. Within the next few months, division units moved S from Katum and Thien Ngon as ARVN moved in. The returning units took little time to lick their wounds. Mech units took maintenance stand-downs to clean their tracks and then moved on to new assignments.

Info From Official Records:

8. (C ) INTELLIGENCE: The general status and disposition of enemy forces in the vicinity of Base Area 352 prior to operation BOLD LANCER I was believed to have been:

<u>UNIT</u> <u>SOURCE</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>STRENGTH</u>	<u>INFO</u>
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95C Regt	Western War Zone C	570	
PW/Contacts			
HQ/9th VC/NVA Div	Base Area 354 (Cambodia)	845	PW/Rallier
Z31 Vic Xom Gia	Base Area 354 (Cambodia)	UNK	PW
272 VC/NVA Regt	NW of Thien Ngon	900	
PW/Contacts			

Note that Base Area 354 covers an area in War Zone C (Viet Nam) and Cambodia W. of Dogs Head.

a. The principal targets of the operation commencing on 6 [4? – ed.] May were the suspected base area, training and logistical facilities and headquarters units of 9th VC/NVA Division located in the northern part of Base Area 706 and Base Area 354 (Cambodia.) A secondary consideration was the 95C Regt in western War Zone C and Base Area 354. This unit had been in an offensive posture since late March, and had conducted numerous attacks against 1st Cavalry Division (AM) FSBs in the area. In addition it was thought that the targeted area in Cambodia contained various support units and replacement organizations. Prisoners captured in previous operations in War Zone C had indicated existence of a unit known as Z-31 which supplied replacements to main force units in the area.

b. When combat operations began in Base Area 354, enemy contact was much less than expected. Initially groups of as many as 30-40 NVA were engaged with gunships, but ground contact was limited to scattered exchanges between small groups. There appeared to be no organized resistance and no significant enemy formations were encountered until 9 May when elements of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 5<sup>th</sup> Infantry (Mech) engaged a tenacious enemy force. On 12 May, C/1/5 Inf (M) was attacked by approximately two enemy companies. Although no positive identification was made, the attack was believed to have been by the 95C Regiment. With the exception of this contact, the enemy encountered were not in an offensive posture, and generally were not organized to conduct coordinated defensive operations.

Many of the large base areas discovered had evidently been recently evacuated, with civilians reporting that large numbers of personnel had moved to the west and southwest at the start of the ops.

c. These enemy units were identified as having operated in the area prior to the operation:

<u>UNIT</u>	<u>SOURCE</u>
94 Engr Bn	PW/Documents
C 20 Sig. Co 95C Regt.	Documents
Z-31c Military Hospital	Documents
94 Recovery Regt.	Documents
C23 Hospital, 82 RSG	Documents
Medical Dispensary, 82 RSG	Documents

Z-31, 94 Recovery Regt	PWs	
9 Bn, 94 Recovery Regt	Documents	
Transportation Bn, 82 RSG	Documents	
3rd Bn, 95C Regt	Documents	
K77 Hospital, RS Section COSVN	PWs	
Property and Training Sect. COSVN	Documents	
27 Bn, Engr, Office, Mil. Staff Dept.	Documents	COSVN

A total of 58 bunker and hooch complexes, 11 rice storage areas, six arms and munitions storage areas, four hospital complexes (one of them with 250 beds) and a complete workshop with arc-welders and machine tools (drill press, lathe) was found in the objective area. The road and trail network indicated motor vehicle traffic and numerous motorboats and sampans were captured along the Rach Cai Bach River.

Two Bn-size training areas were also found containing, living quarters, bleacher areas and classrooms, large mess halls and wooden mock-ups of tanks, jets and helicopters. Base Area 354 was most likely a training, rest, and staging area for the 9th VC/NVA Division and supporting elements.

d. The Cambodian part of Base Area 354 was an area about 17 km by 13 km, bounded on the east by Rach Cai Bach (Rach Beng Go) R. and on the south by Prek Kampong Spean R. Neither is fordable. The Rach Cai Bach is approx 50 meters wide and the Prek Kampong Spean is slightly larger at 50 -70m. Consequently there are no direct routes of approach into the area from SVN. The east half is densely forested and provides few LZs except in the extreme south. [?] Many roads and trails provide good access to the entire base area. Cross country traffic is limited to tracked vehicles as roads and trails soon become difficult for wheels to travel due to deterioration. West of base Area 354 the terrain is sparse woods, and provided good cross country trafficability. The operation was conducted during the latter part of the dry season and only scattered showers fell during the period. As rains increased, trafficability was considerably reduced. Weather had little effect on aircraft ops during Bold Lancer I. Good flying weather prevailed; only once did ground fog delay an airmobile op until midmorning.

e. Early in Phase I, cover and concealment in Area 354 was of two types. Approximately a third of the area was open and flat providing no cover and very limited concealment. Most open areas were dry rice paddies affording limited concealment behind rice paddy dikes for infantry, and no concealment for vehicles. The openness afforded free movement to vehicles towing arty pieces and also offered unrestricted vision and field of fire. Few problems were encountered in these areas. All open areas in Area 354 were usable for both tracked and, to a large extent, wheeled vehicles providing avenues of approach from any direction. The other two thirds of the area were densely vegetated varying from double to triple canopy. Vehicles were limited to dirt roads and wide trails. Ground troops were restricted by thick underbrush although there were numerous trails throughout.

Limited cover was provided by the dense canopy, and considerable concealment was provided by the thick undergrowth.. Observation and fields of fire were restricted at times to a few feet and at best a few m. in all densely vegetated areas. During the initial assault into Cambodia, two critical terrain features became evident. The

first was the bridge site across the Rach Cai Bach River at Lo Go (vic WT969752) that provided access through the forest to the W by trails to the village of Tasuos.

This bridge-head also provided road access S to Prek Kampong Spean River. The second feature was the village of Tasuos directly west of the bridge. Tasuos controlled the junction of several roads, and air-mobiling 3/22 Infantry. to secure he village enabled rapid deployment of a mechanized infantry unit west and then south after reaching the village. The road south from the bridgehead and adjacent to the Rach Cai Bach River was used by another mechanized infantry battalion providing a suitable avenue of approach to the south.

f. The population in Base Area 354 was largely located west and south of the bridge site at Lo Go (subsequently FSB MINNIE WT969752). Tasuos (WT917747) was the focus of much of the initial tactical operations. Nowhere in the TAOI did village population exceed 800. Just south of the TAOI was Kampong Trach city (WT866615, ) population over 1000. The attitude of the populace was initially fear, followed by

warmth and cooperation. 1/5 Inf (Mech), 2/14 Infantry and 2/22 Infantry (Mech) enjoyed friendly relations with local villagers, though at Tasuos [spelling varies by source] 3/22 Infantry encountered ill will because of an artillery incident.

9. (C) MISSION: 1ST Brigade, 25th Infantry Division relieved elements of 1st Cav Division (AM) in northwestern War Zone C on 4 May and attacked into Base Area 354 to locate and destroy enemy supply staging areas, equipment and personnel.

10. (C) CONCEPT OF OPERATION: 1st Brigade, 25th Inf Division conduct Op Bold Lancer in three phases: Phase I - Movement of Brigade elements into northwest War Zone C, relief of elements of 1st Cavalry Division (AM,) and preparation for attack (4 and 5 May).

Phase II - Attack and river crossing. On 6 May, 1970 one infantry battalion air assaulted into Cambodia. One company secured the west bank of the Rach Cai Bach River by air assault, while 2/22 Infantry (Mech) secured the east bank. Co E 665th Engineers built a float bridge for 1/5 Inf (Mech) and 2/22 Inf (Mech) for crossing to Cambodia.

Phase III - Detailed Search – Air insertion of another infantry battalion on 8 May 1970 began the detailed search of the base area. This continued through 14 May 70 with all Bde elements. The enemy suffered significant losses. 1075 enemy were KIA, 54 POW, and 22 Hoi Chanh were received by 25th Infantry Division forces. Consequently, the enemy was forced to move troops and supply bases deeper into Cambodia and considerable time and effort has been required to reconstitute them. Troops intended for offensives have been diverted to supply and support services.

\* \* \* \* \*

*emails*

*June 17, 2003*

*Let me give you a long answer to your question.*

Yes -- I was still "part time" with "C" company in June 70. Starting with the initial incursion in early May 70, I rotated between 4/23, "F", 75th rangers, and two SF teams (A-223& A-225). Why???????????????????? I received a field commission on 2 May, 70 and, as a result, had to leave the company. I was sent to the SF units, but when the incursion occurred, I was sent back to support "C", 4/23 due to early casualties of junior officers during the incursion.

As I recall, the Bn came back to RVN about mid May from what became known as NVA base 354 -- and to prepare to respond to Base 353. During mid June 69, 4/23 was back in Cambodia for operations near Mermot. At that time, I was forward deployed further north near Snoul. On June 18th, I was not with "C" company near Mermot. My recollection was that LT Hardamon was a relatively new Platoon Leader (less than a month). However, I don't recall to which platoon he was assigned, At the time that I was forward deployed, both 2nd and 3rd platoons were without LTs. BUT ---- I do recall the ambush!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! If you were with the main body, I believe that all records will verify that you were on the road just across the border near Mermot.

That week of June 70, that included the 20th, was quite memorable for me. I like to say ---- "I fought the war, and the war won -- big time".

Now JSB. What platoon were you with??? When do you join "C" company. When did you leave??? Who was your platoon Sgt.???? Do you have pictures??? Please tell me more, for I am hungry for "C" company information Names?? Addresses??? What other actions do you recall with "C" company????? And whatever information I can find.

Thanks JSB.

John M. "C" 4/23 69-70

Jan 29, 04

Like you say Bill the mind is a little numb, I could be wrong but did it happen when we went to Cambodia. The first night there we opened fire, I do not who first fired but I thought we must of had movement in front of us, Ranger Dan thought it was because of those lizards at night that sounds like there saying F. U. All I remember is the next morning we ended up firing up a village and had many wounded from there

Dave M

Jan 29, 04

Bob sounds as if everyone was lucky that day. That reminds me of something that happened in RECON in 1970. This is very hazy and Dave M. or Ranger Dan if you remember it different by all means speak up. RECON was in a night defensive position right up against either rubber plantations or jungle. We were all set up for the night. Guards posted on the tracks and everything was quite. Well, someone went out front to take a dump. I don't know who it was. Whoever it was made a lot of noise, not a good thing to do in front of a guard position armed with a 50 cal. Another guy had put down the surf board and crawled up there to sleep. Well, the guard heard the noise the guy asleep heard the noise and stood up on the surf board. I think you can imagine what happened. The guard shot our own man on the surf

board. I believe the guard had only been in the RECON a couple of days and was immediately transferred out for his own safety. Like I said this is very hazy in this chemo brain of mine so if anyone saw it different please correct me.

BILL BATEMAN RECON 70-71

Jan 30, 04

Dave I can't remember where we were I just kind of remember the incident. I think we went into Cambodia almost as soon as I arrived so it very well could have been in Cambodia. I don't remember the village. That doesn't mean anything though I remember some things very vivid. Like the night Magnuson and Sanders were KIA. Then I can't remember the names of the places we were at. Maybe it's just been a lot of year trying to forget. BILL BATEMAN RECON 70

Jan 29, 04

Like you say Bill the mind is a little numb, I could be wrong but did it happened when we went to Cambodia. The first night there we opened fire, I do not who first fired but I thought we must of had movement in front of us, Ranger Dan thought it was because of those lizards at night that sounds like there saying F. U. All I remember is the next morning we ended up firing up a village and had many wounded from there

Dave M

Apr 17, 2011

Neil,

Some where I have the dates and a brief journal. I'll try to find it. I can tell you we went north of Katum up to Memot and then northwest. We were limited to 18 miles past the border. I don't believe we were that far in. Somewhere after the first week of May maybe 8th or 9th. There were plenty of battles. Seemed like every day for a while. We left just short of the 30 June deadline and Took up positions at Katum. Stayed there while 11 ACR re-crossed. It took them all day to pass Katum. We patrolled night and day around Katum until the second week of July give or take a few days. We then headed into Tay Ninh and re outfitted. Then the whole battalion moved (2 days) to Xuan Loc. We went further South and broke into company size laagers. Moving every few days, staying north of Blackhorse and south of Xuan Loc. That's my recollection. Wayne could probably sharpen the details a little.

RD

I can tell you the photo in the yearbook for 1970 with the track all burned up happened 25 May near Memot. There were two Bravo mortar tracks and two Recon tracks heading for a B company battle midday. The first RPG went right under the LT sitting on top of that track. Went right into the ammo apparently. I remember the hair straightening out on my neck just prior to that moment. Now I don't hardly have any hair left LOL! name detached

May 5, 2011

Doug Rogers:

Welcome aboard. My name is John Mohler. I led the FO team in Charlie Company during the 69-70 period. My primary track was the Command track. You mention 2nd

*platoon, 23 track in March 1970. Do you happen to recall SGT Craig Emery. He was the driver of 23 track that was KIA on 15 March 1970 at the eastern side of The Mountain????????*

*Or, do you recall SFC Terry Trobough ---- Platoon Sgt of 3rd platoon?????? Or Bobby Kammerer of the 3rd platoon? John M*

*Mar 17, 06*

*My two cents worth. When we went into Cambodia in late may of 70. We had a flame track with Alpha company. This was a day or two after we were at the Bn. Laager. Alpha had one flame track and we were ambushed and the flame track was hit right off. And I never saw the flame tracks with us again. That was just before we moved outside Memut and into the Laager with the dozer pushed berm around us. And we had the 155's with us there.*

*Joe Welsh*

*A Company Class of 70*

*Jul 26, 11*

*Neil, -- Reuben Medina. was wounded 25 May 1970. Lt Allison was also wounded. There were others but don't have the names. There's a picture in the 1970 yearbook of the track he was on when an RPG went right under Lt Allison's his seat. She burned pretty good.*

*Reuben was wounded as he bailed off the top of the track sprained one ankle and got shot through the femur (SP?) on the other leg. Two Bravo tracks and two Recon tracks were ambushed by a well executed L shaped ambush just west of Memot, Cambodia. Right in the middle of an NVA base camp with reinforced bunkers. I believe Terry L Sanders was driver.*

*Terry L Sanders KIA 3 July 1970 at Katum during a sapper attack. David Magnuson died 20 July 1970 in Japan of wounds from same night.*

*Dan*

*Jul 28, 11*

*Neil*

*Dan would never say but he was a true hero that day. Dan saw Medina get hit and crawled out into the rice paddy to help Medina. he wrapped a towel around his leg to stop the bleeding and returned fire while dragging M. to safety.*

*Dan saved Rubin M's life and Rubin thanks him every time he sees Dan.*

*Doug*

*Jul 28, 11*

*Neil -- I agree, Dan should have received a silver star for that action. The funny part was Dan put his M16 on Rubin's ass and returned fire to save Rubin. LOL We always joke with Rubin that Dan used him as cover.*

*Doug*

*\* \* \* \* \**



**TOAN THANG IV PHASE III** lasted until 30 June when all US units pulled out of Cambodia. 2nd Brigade remained OPCON to II FFV until 7 May when the Brigade reverted to control of 25th Infantry Division for ops in Cambodia. Op TOAN THANG 43 Phase II began on 9 May and lasted until 15 May at which time 2nd Brigade joined 1st Brigade in TOAN THANG 43 Phase III until 10 June. The 2nd Brigade, like the 1st Brigade, was successful in locating many enemy supply caches and captured or destroyed tons of enemy food and equipment. During July, 2nd Bde assumed control of a new AO around Xuan Loc in Long Khanh and Phuoc Tuy Provinces and resumed Operation TOAN THANG IV, concentrating on the destruction of the enemy and his supplies. 2nd Bde elements also were assisted in pacification in their new AO. 1st Brigade had captured or destroyed many tons of food, clothing, medical supplies, weapons and munitions. During the last month of the quarter, 1st Brigade was assigned to a new AO in north-central Tay Ninh and northwest Binh Long Provinces and continued Opn TOAN THANG IV, interdicting enemy infiltration from Cambodia and destroying bases along the border. Tay Ninh Base Camp and surroundings, the 1st Brigade's AO before the Cambodian Op, were turned over to the 25th ARVN Division during July. **KIA on June 8, 1970 in Cambodia was Dennis W Valusek of Bravo Co.**

RESULTS: In nine days of BOLD LANCER I, results were: Enemy Losses: 283 NVA KIA, 12 POW's, seven Hoi Chanhs, 297 individual and 34 CSW, 1561 rounds + several tons of HE ammo (destroyed), nine cases 4847 S/A rds, 222 tons of rice, 355 lbs of documents, 705 buildings, 1202 bunkers, 56 non-motorized sampans, 12 boats with inboard motors, eight tons corn, one mimeograph machine, two boxes of ink, three sets binoculars, 17 wire cutters, 15 picks, 500 pick and shovel heads, 60 garden hose heads, 17 cases of glass vials, 17 gunny sacks of empty plasma bottles, five cases of glass tubing, 1536 lbs of explosive. 55 anti-tank mines, two ten-KW generators, a 250 bed hospital complex, 30 rolls of barbed wire, 100 saw blades, ten small motors, five sewing machines, two boxes of blasting caps, 100 pistol holsters, one drill press, one lathe, two 55 gal drums of fuel oil, two arc welders, 30 4satchel charges, 1070 lbs of clothing, ten shaped charges, 17 sets of web gear, 4 rucksacks, ten detonators, radio, 60 AK magazines, 100 MG barrels, 150 machine gun drums, 20 canteens, 1800 unknown paper forms.

For the quarter ending 31 July, B-52 strikes targeted in the ARVN III Corps and particular emphasis on Cambodian targets that received 186 Arc Light strikes. The withdrawal was supported by 36 strikes.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **CAMBODIA IN PERSPECTIVE – General Don Starry**

By the end of June free world forces in Cambodia had captured or destroyed almost ten thousand tons of materiel and food. In terms of enemy needs this amount was enough rice to feed more than 25,000 troops a full ration for an entire year; individual weapons to equip 55 full-strength battalions; crew-served weapons to equip 33 full battalions; and mortar, rocket, and recoilless rifle ammunition for more

than 9,000 average attacks against free world units. In all, 11,362 enemy soldiers were killed and over 2,000 captured.

\* \* \* \* \*

In Military Region 3 the results of TOAN THANG 42 and 43 were also impressive, and had a great psychological and material effect on the enemy. Even more important, RVN forces had operated over great distances for long periods without direct American assistance and often without advisers. This fact provided a great boost to South Vietnamese morale and improved fighting ability. The Vietnamese forces had temporarily strengthened the position of the Cambodian government and brought some measure of order to its border provinces.

On the other side of the ledger, the results of the last expedition from Military Region 3 revealed the continued existence of command and control problems among South Vietnamese commanders. To overcome timidity and lack of coordination at high command levels, would, in the final analysis, be more important than material gains.

\* \* \* \* \*

The most important effect of the operations in Cambodia must be looked for within South Vietnam; here the attacks bought time for strengthening their forces and the United States to continue withdrawals. For the next 14 months there were almost no Viet Cong and NVA operations in South Vietnam. The Cambodian operations greatly in-creased the confidence of Vietnamese armored forces in their ability to wage a successful and prolonged campaign. It was the most convincing evidence since Tet 1968 of the improvement of SVN armored forces. The high morale of the AFVN forces convinced American advisers that the Vietnamese were well on their way to being able to fight the war on their own.

\* \* \* \* \*

In the mass of enemy information captured in the Cambodian border sanctuaries, an unsettling detail picked up was that the "Sihanouk Trail" was discovered to have been delivering much more supplies and material to III CTZ and to a lesser extent, IV CTZ than military intelligence had estimated via a route by ship into Cambodia via the port of Sihanoukville, and from there inland to the north and east to RVN. THE NVA was also confirmed to have opened western branches off the northern Ho Chi Minh trail into northwest Cambodia that skirted much of the B-52 bombing and other interdiction efforts of the HCM trail. US Intel was split along the same lines as the "order of battle controversy" that surrounded [never resolved – ed.] Tet and its Aftermath, with CIA and State Department reporting higher levels (pessimistic to US policy makers), and MACV reporting lower. These issues, of NVA numbers in Cambodia, were also intertwined with the Cambodian political split between Sihanouk and his sympathizers, and Lon Nol and his, and the emergence of Khmer Rouge – much too complicated to attempt to summarize here.

\* \* \* \* \*

## **NEW CAMPAIGN: COUNTEROFFENSIVE PHASE VII 1 July 1970 - 30 JUNE 1971**

Members of **4<sup>th</sup> Bn 23<sup>rd</sup> Inf (Mech)** killed in action include on 3 July, **Terry L. Sanders**, and **David J. Magnuson** of **HHC** on 20 July.

### **Post Cambodia**

Quoted From Official Reports:

During the quarter from 1 August 1970 to 31 October 1970, the US 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, US 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division (until 22 September) and 11<sup>th</sup> Armored Cavalry Regiment successfully disrupted enemy movement of men and supplies throughout the Division's AO, thus preventing significant enemy offensive activity. In general, fighting was light and scattered during the quarter as the enemy avoided contact. This low level was attributed to highly successful Cambodian ops undertaken by the 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division in May and June in which enemy border supply points were destroyed.

Enemy units throughout the Division's AO suffered from acute supply shortages, making sustained offensive activity against Division units and installations or Saigon virtually impossible. The 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division and its OPCON units concentrated on upgrading ARVN/PF/RF forces to continue the Vietnamization program as well as insure the continued success of RVN's pacification program.

2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade's AO included Tuy Long Khanh and Bien Hoa Provinces. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade's maneuver Battalions were 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 27<sup>th</sup> Inf (until 20 Aug); 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 22<sup>nd</sup> Inf; **4<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Mech), 23<sup>rd</sup> Inf**; 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion (M), 5<sup>th</sup> Inf; and 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 3<sup>rd</sup> Inf (15-28 September.) Enemy units in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade's AO were the 274 NVA Regiment, 74 NVA Artillery Regiment and 84 Rear Service Group. 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade conducted ground reconnaissance and search operations through the AO to disrupt enemy movement.

\* \* \* \* \*

AAR Narrative: First week of August, 1st Brigade continued TOAN THANG IV with four battalions in north-central Tay Ninh and northwest Binh Long Provinces. There were no significant shelling incidents reported during the week. Eight contacts were reported in 1st Brigade's AO resulting in nine enemy KIA. A convoy from Battery C/277th Artillery received SA and RPG fire from both sides of a road in Michelin Rubber Plantation 4.5 km east of Dau Tieng at 1206 hrs (illegible) August. One US soldier was WIA and there was light damage to a 2-1/2 ton truck and two 105mm howitzers. Fire was returned by organic weapons, artillery, a Duster, and Company D/2/14th Infantry reacted with unknown results. Three enemy were KIA in two engagements by A/2/14 Infantry on 6 August. At 1700 hours, one enemy was KIA

five kilometers south of Ben Cui. At 1934 hours two enemy were killed 400 meters northwest of the 1700 hours contact.

**On 1 August, Jon H. Nordquist of Charlie Company was killed in action by an explosive device.**

Enemy activity within the 25<sup>th</sup> Division's AO increased slightly during the second week of August (8-14 August) as the enemy tried to launch some kind of offensive. The most active units were 101<sup>st</sup> NVA and 268<sup>th</sup> Regiments in SR-1. In the other sub-regions, enemy main and local force units generally avoided contact while engaging in supply activities and harassment of GVN pacification. The number of minings increased to 17 from 11 the previous week, resulting in two US soldiers KIA & 41 WIA.

2nd Brigade continued TOAN THANG IV during the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of August with three maneuver Battalions in Phuoc Tuy and Long Khanh Provinces. There were no significant ground contacts or shelling incidents reported as enemy units continued to suffer severe supply shortages.

Enemy activity remained at a low level throughout the 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division's AO between August 15-21 as enemy main and local force units avoided contact in order to re-establish still inadequate supply channels. SR-1 was the most active area, with the 101<sup>st</sup> NVA and 268<sup>th</sup> Regiments identified by captured documents. Also, moderate sensor activity from the southern part of the Fishhook to the Razorbacks, Michelin Plantation and Saigon River Corridor was recorded. There were no significant attacks reported. However, mining incidents increased by four from last week to 21, resulting in one US soldier KIA and 26 WIA.

1st Brigade continued TOAN THANG IV with four Battalions in north-central Tay Ninh and northwest Binh Long Provinces. Enemy activity was light, with only three significant contacts reported. A five-ton truck from

A/2/12 Infantry with the 588<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion received SA and RPG fire from both sides of Highway 13, 4.5 km northeast of Phu Khuong at 0930 of 15 August.

After firing, several enemy (some dressed in ARVN uniforms & armed with M16s) boarded the truck and engaged men with SA fire, killing four US and wounding five.

Fire was returned by organic weapons, artillery, an LFT and FAC with unknown results. In the other significant action that week, C/2/60<sup>th</sup> Infantry received small arms fire from six to eight enemy during a sweep of a claymore detonation 10 km northwest of Minh Thanh at 1700 hours 18 August. Two enemy were KIA by organic weapons fire and a LFT while US casualties were three KIA. One M79 launcher, one AK-47, and a few letters were captured and evacuated.

Enemy activity remained at a low level during the 4<sup>th</sup> week of August in 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade's AO as four Battalions of the Brigade operated in Tay Ninh and Binh Duong Provinces. There were nine contacts with enemy forces resulting in 21 enemy KIA. An LFT from D/3/4 Cavalry engaged six enemy 8 km NW Ben Suc (XT506376) at 1120 on 22 August resulting in two enemy killed. An ARP was inserted in the area and at 1305 hours they located and destroyed one structure and one bunker. 50 lbs

of rice, 20 water bags, misc clothing and a small amount of documents were evacuated. In two engagements on 23 August, A/2/22 Infantry (Mech) killed six enemy with claymores six kilometers southeast of Ben Suc Ho Bo Woods at 1836 and 1852 hours. Two of the bodies were located in the contact site while A/3/4 Cavalry located the other four about one km west at 1225 on 24 August. At 1600 on 24 August, 3/4 Cavalry located six more enemy bodies at the same spot. This body count was credited to an A/2/27 Infantry contact on 21 August at 1930, 3 km southeast of Ben Suc.

25th Infantry Division and 3rd Brigade, 9th Infantry Division killed 103 and captured ten enemy during August, accounted for (illegible) individual weapons and 4.9 tons of rice captured or destroyed, 156 mines and booby traps also destroyed. The US 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division's losses were 165 US soldiers wounded and eight killed.

The first week of September, enemy activity within the 25th Infantry Division's AO was light and scattered. The other significant activity occurred on the evening of 3 September, the anniversary of Ho Chi Minh's death. Although six FSBs received attacks by fire, the damage was insignificant. In general, main force units avoided contact while engaging in resupply activities. The most active units continued to be in SR-1 with elements of 101st NVA and 268<sup>th</sup> Regiments identified in captured documents. The number of mining incidents decreased to 16 from 34 reported during the last week of August resulting in 20 US WIA.

1st Brigade continued TOAN THANG IV with five battalions (2/34 Armor moved OPCON to 1st Brigade on 3 September) operating in north-central Tay Ninh and northwest Binh Long Provinces. One significant shelling incident reported on 3 September when Dau Tieng Base Camp received 25 rounds of 82mm mortar fire at 2150 hours. Only one round impacted inside, wounding one US soldier. There were three contacts reported resulting in five enemy KIA. A/2/60<sup>th</sup> Infantry engaged an unknown number of enemy with claymores 11 km north of Minh Thanh at 1725 on 1 September resulting in one enemy KIA. Documents identified the Distribution Office, 43rd Postal Transportation Group, Postal Transportation and Communications Office of COSVN. An AH1G Cobra from 187th AHC took 51 caliber MG fire 13 kilometers east of Katum at 1050 on 6 September resulting in two US WIA and heavy damage to the Cobra which crashed. D/2/60<sup>th</sup> Infantry reacted to secure the aircraft until it was extracted at 1515 hours.

A few small caches were located by 1st Brigade forces during the week. D Company 2/14 Infantry located three cases of M72 LAWs (15 weapons) along a trail 6 km north of Dau Tieng (XT512534) at 1000 hrs on 2 September. Alpha 3/4 Cavalry evacuated 15 lbs of medical supplies and one US pistol belt from a bunker complex 4.5 kilometers southeast of Phu Khuong (XT367549) at 0800 on 4 September. A/2-60 Infantry located a munitions cache 13.5 kilometers east of Katum (XT464885) at 1030 hrs on 7 September. They destroyed 75 RPG rounds, 1.5 cases of powder trains, seven rifle grenades and two Chicom hand grenades.

2nd Brigade continued TOAN THANG IV with three Battalions in Long Khanh and Phuoc Tuy Provinces. There were no significant shelling incidents reported. Two ground contacts reported one enemy KIA and one POW.

On 8 September at 0940, **Alpha 4/23 Infantry (Mech)** rec'd RPG, small arms and automatic weapons fire from an unknown number of enemy ten kilometer south of Xuan Loc (YS485975) resulting in 26 US WIA and light damage to one APC. Fire was returned by organic weapons, a helicopter light fire team, air strikes, and artillery with unknown results.

**Galen S. Miles of Bravo Co was KIA on 9 September, 1970.**

On 11 September, C/3/22<sup>nd</sup> Infantry engaged five enemy 18 km southeast of Xuan Loc (YS605980) at 0930 with organic weapons and artillery, resulting in one enemy KIA and the capture of one wounded PW and one AK-47. The enemy returned fire with small arms with no US casualties.

On 10 September 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division troops accounted for five enemy KIA and two POWs. Helicopter gunships from 25th Aviation Battalion, while supporting the 494th PF Platoon six kilometers south of Hiep Hoa, engaged an unknown number of enemy at 1400 hours with organic weapons, resulting in four enemy KIA and one POW; two AK-47s and one K54 pistol were captured

**Franklin M. Corl of HHC was killed in action on 13 September**

Enemy activity within the 25th Infantry Division's Area of Operations remained at a low level from 15 September – 7 October as the enemy continued to have logistical and health difficulties. Contacts were limited to harassing attacks by fire against allied outposts. The number of mining incidents increased by five over last week to 26, resulting in seven US KIA and 78 WIA.

25th Infantry Division celebrated its 29th Anniversary on 1 October, 1970. Lt Gen Fred Weyand, DEPCOMUSMACV visited Cu Chi Base on 1 October to attend a Presidential Unit Citation Ceremony honoring the 3rd Platoon, C/2/27<sup>th</sup> Infantry and to receive an update on 25th Infantry Division activities. Brig Gen M.J.L. Greene assumed command of the 25th Infantry Division on 6 October as MG General Bautz went on leave.

Enemy activity in the 25th Infantry Division's AO remained low from October 8 – 21 as enemy main and local force units avoided contact in order to resupply.

The most active areas were in the Trapezoid, Ho Bo woods and Boi Loi Woods.. There were no significant shelling incidents reported, but Cu Chi Base received one 122mm rocket at 1827 on 15 October, with one US wounded, and light damage to two buildings. The number of mining incidents resulted in 35 US WIAs.

2nd Brigade continued TOAN THANG IV during the week with three battalions operating in Phuoc Tuy, Long Khanh and Bien Hoa Provinces. Enemy units opposing 2nd Brigade were 274th NVA Infantry Regiment, 74<sup>th</sup> NVA Artillery Regiment, and 84th Rear Service Group. 2nd Brigade also continued to coordinate operations with the Royal Thai Army Volunteer Force (RTAVF), 43rd ARVN Regiment, 18th ARVN Division, and 11th US Armored Cavalry Regiment (-).

Contact with enemy forces was light with four contacts reported resulting in five enemy KIA. At 1050 hours on 16 October, Delta Company, 3-22<sup>nd</sup> Infantry detonated claymores at two enemy 13 kilometers southeast of Xuan Loc (YT571021) resulting in two enemy killed and two rucksacks with misc clothing evacuated.

Snipers from Recon, 3/22<sup>nd</sup> Infantry engaged ten enemy 7 km southwest of Ong Que at 1810 hours on 16 October with organic weapons and supported by artillery and an aerial light fire team, resulting in two enemy KIA and two AK47s evacuated. There was no enemy return fire.

2nd Brigade continued TOAN THANG IV during the 4th week of October with 3 battalions in Phuoc Tuy, Long Khanh and Bien Hoa (Nhon Trach District) Provinces against 274th NVA Regt, 74th NVA Regiment and 84th Rear Service Group. 2nd Brigade also coordinated operations with the RTAVF, 43rd ARVN Regiment, 18th ARVN Division and 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment (-). There were nine contacts with enemy forces resulting in four KIA and one POW. D/3/17 Air Cavalry engaged two enemy with organic weapons 12 km south of Long Thanh at 2050 on 22 October with unknown results. Enemy small arms fire wounded one US soldier and one Kit Carson Scout. One sampan was found and destroyed.

At 1240 hours, 24 October, an APC from **Bravo Company 4/23 Infantry (Mech)** detonated a 10 - 20 pound mine with pressure device 8 km north of Ngai Giao (YS4548838). Troops riding the APCs from **Bravo 4/23 Inf (Mech)** jumped off, only to set off a daisy chain of eight "bouncing betty" anti-personnel mines, resulting in 3 US soldiers KIA and 17 WIA. The armored personnel carrier suffered light damage.  
**Killed were:**

**Russell W. Mulder**

**Michael H. Peterson**

**Gregary A. Wilks (spelled per casualty database)**

On 24 October. Company, 3<sup>rd</sup> Bn, 22<sup>nd</sup> Infantry received small arms and RPG fire from an estimated 30 enemy 5 km northwest of Ong Que at 1615, resulting in three US WIA. Fire was returned by organic weapons and artillery with unknown results. C/3/22 Infantry located a small munitions cache in bunkers 5 km northwest of Ong Que at 1105 hours on 25 October. They destroyed 18 bunkers, one RPG round, and evacuated four AK-47s, two US M72 LAWs, 235 AK-47 rounds, nine AK magazines, one US claymore, three M57 firing devices, two Chicom hand grenades, two lbs documents, and misc clothing and cooking utensils.

D/3/22 Infantry engaged an unknown number of enemy 9 km northwest of Ong Que at 1350 on 28 October, resulting in one enemy KIA and nine AK-47s evacuated. The enemy returned fire with small arms but there were no US casualties.

At 1250 on 29 October, D/3/22<sup>nd</sup> Infantry engaged two enemy with organic weapons 750 meters northwest of the 28 October contact resulting in one enemy KIA and one AK47 evacuated. They destroyed 20 bunkers and one 82mm mortar round. There was no enemy return fire. On 31 October, B/3/22<sup>nd</sup> Infantry located a small weapons cache 3 km north of Ong Que at 1035 and 1315 hours.

They evacuated one .30 caliber B.A.R., two SKS rifles, one 75mm recoilless rifle round, five anti-tank grenades, and destroyed six bunkers, one mess area, one table and one chair.

During the quarter 1 August to 31 October 19 70, 25th Infantry Division; 3rd Brigade, 9th Infantry Division (until 22 September) and 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment successfully disrupted enemy movement of men and supplies throughout the Division's AO thus preventing any significant enemy offensive activity. In general, fighting was light and scattered during the quarter as the enemy avoided contact.

This low level of activity was attributed to the highly successful Cambodian operations undertaken by 25th Infantry Division (among others) in May and June which destroyed enemy border supply points. Enemy units throughout the AO suffered from acute supply shortages, making sustained offensive activity against Division units and installations or Saigon virtually impossible. US 25th Infantry Division and its OPCON units concentrated on upgrading ARVN/PF/RF forces during the quarter in order to continue Vietnamization as well as insure continued success of RVN pacification.

From October 1970 – April 1971, the Division continued emphasis on upgrading ARVN/RF/PF forces thru combined ops and extensive training. The intent was to increase tactical and weapons skills to insure success of RVN pacification program thru protecting villages and hamlets against VC guerrilla activity, also paving the way for the redeployment of US troops as part of the war's continuing Vietnamization.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Oct 22, 04*

*From 25th Inf Division Q3 1970 report: The 2nd Brigade, during the first week of November, continued to operate as part of the 25th Infantry Division in Operation Toan Thang IV. The 2nd Brigade's maneuver battalions were the 1st Battalion (Mech), 5<sup>th</sup> Infantry, 3rd Battalion, 22nd Infantry and 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Mech), 23rd Infantry, which operated in Bien Hoa, Long Khanh and Phuoc Tuy provinces.*

*The 1st and 3rd Brigades continued to disengage from combat during the second week of November (8-14 November) with only one contact reported.*

*The 2nd Brigade continued operating in Bien Hoa (Nhon Trach District), Long Khanh and Phuoc Tuy Province during the third week of November (15-21 November) with three maneuver battalions. Enemy activity was light in the 2nd Bde's*



AO with 12 enemy initiated incidents reported of which one was an attack by fire, nine were ground attacks, one was terrorism and one was aircraft receiving ground fire. Five enemy soldiers were killed and 2nd Brigade units captured five individual weapons during the week. Terrorist activities on the periphery of the AO and reports of food gathering activities. Only two mining incidents were reported during the week resulting in one US soldier wounded.

Enemy activity throughout the 2nd Bde's AO remained at a low level during the fourth week of November (22030 November). There were nine ground contacts and two attacks by fire during the week resulting in 10 enemy killed, three prisoners-of-war captured and six individual weapons evacuated. The most significant increase in activity occurred on 25 and 26 November with a series of contacts in Nhon Trach District and an attack on Suoi Tre village (YT2505). Sensor activity south of the Dong Mai River, in northern Trang Bom District (Bien Hoa Province). This movement between War Zone D and the 2nd Bde's AO was a major infiltration and supply route used by the enemy. However, operations along QL (Highway) 1 and War Zone D hindered the flow of supplies and forced the enemy to rely heavily on the local populace for foodstuffs. This reliance was evident by the enemy's increased presence in the Sparrow Valley area (YT5401) where the rice harvest was being gathered by the local villagers and along QL 1 where "shadow supply system" was set up in the vicinity of Bau Ca, Hung Nghai and Hung Loc villages. Those supplies were brought into the area from Saigon, Bien Hoa and Xuan Loc and used to feed the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 274 NVA Regiment which were operating south of the Suzannah and Ong Que Rubber Plantations.

The 2nd Bde continued operating in Bien Hoa (Nhon Trach District), Long Khanh (Xuan Loc District) and

Phuoc Tuy Provinces during the first week of December (1-7 December) with four maneuver battalions targeted against the 274 NVA Regt, 74 NVA Arty Regt and 84<sup>th</sup> Rear Service Group and local guerilla forces. [1/27<sup>th</sup> Inf was added.] I can send a map of the Xuan Loc area and unit dispositions from early 71.

Neil

\* \* \* \* \*

By the end of the year, the **4<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Mechanized) 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry's** involvement in South Vietnam/ Indochina had ended. There remained 335,794 US military personnel in South Vietnam, down from approximately 475 thousand on 1 January, 1970.

\* \* \* \* \*

Jul 17, 2003

My memory is almost as good as Rick's. I also stand corrected regarding the whereabouts of the colors as opposed to the people in green covered with red and brown organic material. It must have been that reporter person from the Legion. The 4/23 was in or near Mimot from May 6 69 until the end of June. The forward area of Katum was used as resupply and patrol base until the middle of July. At this point the route is not clear in my mind but we ended up in Xuan Loc or SE of there I think between FSB Schwartz and Xuan Loc. I do remember the ATF guys bumming

rations while sharing Victoria Bitters (they never heard of Fosters). As I DEROSd 31 Aug I'm pretty sure they remained until Leaving Country in October?!? If anyone has different dates or places, straighten my young ass out.

Dan

Jul 17, 03

Dan, if you are talking about the Cambodia trip in 70. The Trip according to the 4/23 yearbook was from 23 May to 24 June 1970. Was around an in Katum till mid July then back to Tay Ninh for a week or so then the road trip to Xuan Loc. Bn was in and around Xuan Loc till the stand down last of Nov or early Dec of 70. Here is a pic John B. (bullbat49) sent me out of his copy of the 4/23 yearbook. That is what I can remember. Now to find my aspirin bottle, think I hurt my brain cells.

JW

Jan 7, 2004

Subj: Cat House Owned in Tay Ninh

Wow, for people usually willing to write pages about their experiences, anecdotes, folklore, telling tales on each other, etc -- there's a pretty deafening silence about this personal Tay Ninh Cat House. Surely any Statutes of Limitations have run out . . . Or have they???

Neil

Jan 7, 2004

LMAO!! You noticed that too, huh?

I'm here to tell you....

When Doug told me about it, I confronted Smitty with it at the reunion, all I got was a blank stare and a real red face.. Of course Steve's wife was standing close by so that might account for him mumbling "I don't want to talk about it." He especially changed the subject when I asked about the AK-47..

I can only imagine, knowing some of the unspeakable escapades I witnessed over there. But, I think there is some really meaty tales to come from this episode..

LMAO!!! Come on guys!

History awaits, with bated breath for this chapter of our proud unit history..

It can't be any more embarrassing than trying to run the air boat on dry land.. huh Farmer?

Rick

Jan 9, 2004

Now that I'm back again I can shed some light on the discussion about the alleged home belonging to certain members of CRIP. CRIP 4444 was involved in many activities in 1970, some of which were legitimate. Somewhere along the line the home in question came under the ownership of SSgt Conn. When SSgt Conn DEROS I was home on leave due to my brothers illness. When I went back to Nam the guys informed me that SSgt Conn had given the house to me. I never went back to see it because we were visiting in Cambodia and never made it back to that part of Tay Ninh. I guess in theory I still own it.

I do not remember all that went on there. As far as the AK-47 goes, SSgt Conn

*passed it on to me, and because I am smarter than Doug sometimes, I sold it for 50 bucks to Sgt Lambert from Flame Platoon.  
And that's the rest of the story. Smitty Reed*

*Jan 10, 04*

*I can remember early in 70 the officers at Rawlins started pushing for polished boots .I told them straight up none of Recon would have polished boots because they would shine in the moonlight on bush and the VC could smell the polish. I said we would do one or the other polish boots or Bush. I also suggested we leave Rawlins if they didn't like unpolished boots, then they didn't have to look at us. They figured out we were on the berm for security, they figured out they would like us to stay.*

*Sorry! Like one of the guys said "what were they going to do to me draft me and send me to Vietnam?*

*LOL*

*Doug*

*Jan 14, 04*

*Dave, -- I, am talking about David Jack Magnudson from Chicago. (I just called him by his last name.) We were on a reaction force for the airfield in our own little perimeter by TOC. They came in right in front of the RECON track on the berm. I don't remember if you were in our section but I was wounded by the same B-40 rocket that same night Magnudson was wounded. He was blown over the top of my head I had just put on a flak jacket and sat down on the jeep seat and he was trying to get radio contact with TOC for me. I was trying to find out if we needed to react to the end of the air field. I didn't know we were only being hit where we were. I think they got us confused with TOC. We got the guy that did it and I had the launcher when I was reassigned to 7/1 Air Cav @ Vinh Long. I didn't have enough time in country to leave with RECON. The 7/1st made me check it into an arms room and guess what.*

*It disappeared by the time I left country. I knew that was going to happen but, my hands were tied. I only found out what happened to him for sure this year. It was hard for me to track him down because he was wounded July 3.1970 and died July 22 from wounds received on the 3rd. Magnudson was a great guy.*

*Bill - RECON 70-71*

*Mar 17, 06*

*Ricky, Bobby*

*In 70 the Flame tracks were still with HHC. I remember going out with them a couple of times when they did their burn outs, Ranger Dan probably can verify this. But I know there was times that the Flame tracks would be gone from Rawlins, and they must of worked with some of the line company's*

*Davey M Recon70 Apr 26, 06*

*Mar 17,04*

*Wayne-Everyone:*

*Don't hold me to this as being correct. When we moved to Xuan Loc in late July early Aug, 1970 from Tay Ninh/Cambodia, I remember we were out in the bush for*

a while and then A company went in for a couple days stand down. We went to a small compound in Xuan Loc. Not Husky. The compound was small, we couldn't take the APCs inside. We had to park them across from the main gate in a field. Had to post guards because the field only had a few strands of barbed wire around the edges. Was bad enough that the locals were all around the APCs and the kids were trying to steal us blind. Had to go through the town of Xuan Loc to get to the bars and boom boom girls on the strip across from Husky. After that stand down we never went back to that compound and I think it was called Camp Ogle. Like I said, don't hold me to that cause I could be wrong on the name. (After 36 years CRS has really set in.)

Joe Welsh

A company Class of 70

Jan 30, 04

Joe you are right just talking brings up memories.

You mentioned the Husky compound (I couldn't remember that but, I did remember the compound across from the strip clubs and Boom boom girls). Do you remember when RECON was on stand down there at Husky compound, don't remember what month. Someone from another went out under the wire to visit said establishments and was taken by the VC. We were immediately pulled out of stand down status and sent to the field. We had already removed anything like food from the tracks. We were sent out to a blocking position to sit on top of this hill. About 3 days later no water and no food the Chaplain showed up. A few of the guys were complaining to him about the situation and rightfully so. That afternoon we had a bladder of water slung out by a Huey and the Sergeant Major came out all pissed off because we had complained. We were without water and food I think we had the right to complain. The guy the VC picked up was never found I don't think. Did you ever hear of this? Bounce anything off of me anytime. Like you said when someone mentions something you start remembering. BILL BATEMAN RECON 70

April 1, 06

Here are some notes that I received a while back from Adam Elia, who works for the Curator of the Tropic Lightning Museum in Schofield Barracks.

Wayne

(Attached)

FSB/OB Lynch Notes from AAR 25ID 1 Aug 1970-31 Oct 1970

CO of the Battalion during the period 1 Aug – 31 Oct 1970 was LTC Edward M.

Bradford

From 125<sup>th</sup> Signal Section

- 16 Sep 1970 VHF system between OB Lynch and FSB Tomahawk was inactivated.

- 4 October 1970 a VHF System was established between OB Lynch and Blackhorse (poss. YS391899) in support of TF333, a joint S. Vietnamese task force.

- 21 October 1970, the OB Lynch Blackhorse system was inactivated as TF333 completed its mission

- 23 October the Cu Chi/OB Lynch VHF system, relayed through Long Binh, was deactivated. The CP of the 2<sup>nd</sup> BDE moved from OB Lynch to Xuan Loc.

From 65<sup>th</sup> Engineer Section

- During the quarter, Company B continued work at Operations Base Lynch and several fire support bases during the quarter. Throughout the entire quarter, Company B continued upgrading and developing OB Lynch, on which work had begun in early July. All sections of the defensive perimeter were improved, including the berm line, fields of fire, and defensive wire emplacements.

- The most significant move during the quarter was Company B's relocation from OB Lynch to Camp Frenzell Jones located in the Long Binh support area complex. The move was completed on 23 October. By the end of the quarter, OB Lynch had shrunk to the size of an artillery base.

From Division Artillery Operations: 1<sup>st</sup> Bn. 8<sup>th</sup> Artillery- The battalion continued its direct support mission to the 2<sup>nd</sup> BDE. On 23 October, the battalion CP moved from OB Lynch to Xuan Loc and the battalion rear moved to Camp Fenzell Jones.

From 725 Maintenance Battalion Section

- Support realignment for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade was effected following the move from OB Lynch with Company C replacing Company D and moving from Cu Chi to Xuan Loc. The majority of support was provided from that location; and in addition, a forward support detachment was established at OB Lynch.

Apr 24, 06

Don't recall even being in a FSB during late July-late August 70. We had a continuously moving lager. Moved every 3 days or so. Had engineers to push berm and flatten it out as we moved. This may be a reporters idea of a firebase. Much like the 67-68 Recon boys told me they operated in similar fashion in Iron triangle I believe. We tangled with elements of the 33d NVA Regiment more than once south of Xuan Loc but north of 11 AC's Bearcat?! ["Bearcat was a US operational base several miles roughly east of Saigon. – ed.] Sound familiar anyone? Also became acquainted with members of 1st ATF or 3rd ATF I can't remember which. They always had Victoria Bitters or some other outstanding brew. Had a lot of fun with them. One Sgt was showing me is 9mm Browning made in Belgium and our PLT Sgt Sugar Bear asked to take a look at it. Fired it into the ground about 6 in from Aussies foot, who coolly responded " here mate , better let me have that back". Couldn't believe he didn't even jump. A little while later Sugar Bear spilled a little beer on the ground next to the same Sgt. I thought they ( all of the Aussies) were going to kill him. They got this huge E-7 ( Sugar Bear)down on the ground, tied his hands behind his back and pulled his pants down. Chased him around the perimeter with a stick hitting him in the ass and chastising him for " Spilling the Piss". I'll never forget that. There was a FSB Lynch that was built around an intersection, similar to FSB Burt N of the mountain. Lynch was about 20 miles south of Xuan Loc.

They opened up the wire every day to let traffic through as I remember. Correct me if I'm wrong, please.

Dan

August 2, 07

Pat, welcome to the group. I was in C Co. in 70. Suoi Da, now that was certainly a loving and caring little village, if you were VC. I suppose you spent a lot of time in the

*Crescent as we did as well as around the base of Nui Ba Den before going to Cambodia. Good to have you.  
John Baker*

*Jan 25, 08*

*Wayne, when I came in country Doug Turner was PLt. leader in 1st. Plt. Robert Schmidt replaced him . Then Gary Mann and then William Fischer. John Alljets was CO. Terry O'Hara replaced him sometime in Feb. or March. He was wounded week or two prior to Cambodia and Robert Schmidt replaced him. Schmidt was wounded in Cambodia and I believe O'Hara came back for a short while and was wounded again. Then it was Mann and whoever was standing that day until Fischer became CO. Me and a guy was talking at a C Co. reunion, from Cambodia on it was like nobody was in charge. That's how I remember it.*

*John Baker*

*Dec 22, 08*

*The track California Dreamin was there from May to October 1970.*

*Joe Welsh.*

*Mar 18, 09*

*Dave, -- I was for all intents and purposes the battalion communication NCO from around June 70 in Cambodia until the end. There was a staff sergeant who was the official 31G40 but he always stayed wherever the rear was while I was always with the TOC.*

*When you write about a brigade HQ at Katum I'm curious. I know there was a SF camp up near Katum but I always thought the brigade HQ was built in May 70 when Cambodia happened. When we came out of Cambodia we set up inside the old brigade perimeter. They'd already left to go back to Tay Ninh, I believe. So what was there in 68 - 69?*

*Reunion got canceled because of low turnout but we may be turning it back on. Expect email from John.*

*Marty*

*Oct 19, 09*

*: Dates: May, 1969 - April 1970, Delta company, assigned to Headquarters company at Fire-support base Rawlins for duration of my tour. You might find this funny but being assigned to Headquarters company I never knew the chain of command at Delta, so whenever I visited base camp I didn't know who was who.*

*Ritchie (Lecesse)*

*Dec 21, 09*

*I know that Alpha lost at least three during my short time with the 4/23rd. Two to mines, both from 2nd Plt. Mike Brooks and I were on one and the other was about twenty feet behind me while we were dismounted. Both of those were in Nam. In Cambodia, the track in front of us was hit by an RPG. I think it was from 1st Plt.*

*Brownie*

Dec 24, 09

*The move to Xuan Loc, if I remember correctly, was in mid July [1970]. I DEROSd on 19 August. I left around the 15th.*

*When we first arrived at Xuan Loc we operated out of a NDP. Sometime around the last of July, first of August, I told my squad leader, SGT West, I think, that I wasn't going out in the field anymore and that I would find myself a REMP job until my DEROS. I hung out at the mess tent, rode with the resupply track and took the water buffalo to the Aussie compound to refill it. Now*

*that I am thinking about Xuan Loc, I do remember the beginnings of a FSB just before I left.*

*John B.*

Oct 22, 04

*From the time we moved to the area south of Xuan Loc in July after Cambodia until we left on 18 Nov, the TOC was in three different locations. When we first got there, we built up a brand new base that was recon, flame, 4.2, CRIP. I have a photo that shows a 81 mortar track with red markings in the perimeter so at some time a line company was there too. Australian engineers built our berm because nobody else was in the area yet. Brigade set up headquarters right on the road between Xuan Loc and Ba Ria. It was a pretty big position on both sides of that road. As units were pulled out of this area and sent to Long Binh for deactivation, other units moved into this perimeter. We moved into this area in September I think. I don't have any photos because I'd shipped my camera home because of the humidity. I think the photos going around may be from this area because of the tower. I don't recall a tower at the small base. The brigade area had lots of towers and a really tall tower for antennas. We were located on the west side of the road, brigade TOC was on the east. This is where we were when we had some people come up during the middle of the day and shoot into the perimeter. I remember hearing AK fire and wondering, "Who's shooting' all those AKs in the middle of the day? They'll sure be in trouble!" I stepped out of the back of the track and turned towards the sound when I heard the rounds buzz by. Oooops. There was a LOH there and the arty FO went up and directed fire as they retreated. He had an AK round come up through the skin of the LOH and lodge in his head behind his left ear. Because it hit the LOH skin first it had expended most of the energy so it didn't go through the skull into his brain.*

*When brigade left, we moved the TOC over to the east side of the road. All that was left was us and some 155 self propelled. We had a quad 50 and duster from 2nd field force attached. 18 November we packed it up and drove to Long Binh. Arrived that afternoon, turned in all weapons, and the war was over. . . . . except for the night I spent in jail at Di An but that's another story.*

*Marty*

Mar 31, 10

*Cliff, -- Captain Drew was with Bravo into 70. He was our CO on 1/9/70 when Danny (CMH awarded) was killed. My track had been hit by an RPG and I was only one not wounded and provided cover fire for Cpt. Drew to call in support. I don't [confusing text here – ed] remember exactly when he left but, he did not go to Cambodia with us. He lives in Bakersfield CA and his phone number is listed in the*

data base phone book. Dave, -- I was for all intents and purposes the battalion communication NCO from around June 70 in Cambodia until the end. There was a staff sergeant who was the official 31G40 but he always stayed wherever the rear was while I was always with the TOC. When you write about a brigade HQ at Katum I'm curious. I know there was a SF camp up near Katum but I always thought the brigade HQ was built in May 70 when Cambodia happened. When we came out of Cambodia we set up inside the old brigade perimeter. They'd already left to go back to Tay Ninh, I believe. So what was there in 68 - 69?

Reunion got canceled because of low turnout but we may be turning it back on. Expect email from John. Marty

Pat Bryan Bravo 69 - 70

PS Hey whitey, do you remember anything about Captain Horn tour or what happened to him?

Apr 10, 2010

Cliff, -- 1. Lt John David Revier Oct 1969 (murdered in fragging @Tay Ninh BC Oct 25, 1969) Only about 2 weeks with Recon.

2. Lt David Allison seriously wounded near Mimot Cambodia May 25, 1970 ( SFC Robinson "Sugar Bear") until Lt Jones arrived (West Point grad?). Took Command In March 1970

3. During a period of Jan-Feb March no officer, just Shake n Bake NCO's SSG Conn and SSG Burch.

4. Lt Beaver wasn't Recon Plt Leader in 1970 (mid 1969?. I believe it was 1969, He was Captain Beaver CRIP in 1970.

5. Don't remember Lt Olsen

6. Lt Jones took command mid July 1970 somewhere between Ops at Katum after withdrawing from Cambodia and move to Xuan Loc.

Dan Burch

Apr 17, 2011

Neil,

I missed the Cambodia operation and the move from Tay Ninh to Xuan Loc, but here is a picture that John Baker took of the move. John would probably be the one that could sharpen up some of the details a little. I spent a lot of time with him at the OKC reunion and he seems to have a very good memory. He was in Cambodia and was on the detail that cleaned up the tracks when we stood down in December of 1970. In Xuan Loc, we did move every few days. Although the battalion HQ was at Xuan Loc, we spent very little time there. Our AO was south of Xuan Loc around the famed FSB Lynch, which was on highway LTL 2 I believe. During that time we conducted daily patrols, and the platoons took turns pulling road security north and south of FSB Lynch, as Lynch was built right on LTL 2, with the road splitting the middle of the Fire Base. Half of Lynch was on one side of the road, and half on the other. At 6:00 P.M. the road was closed at the north and south sides of the Fire Base until the next morning. I remember one time we caught a girl (I think she was hired to fill sand bags or was a hooch girl or something) that was walking off the distances between the bunkers at Lynch and plotting them on a map for a VC mortar platoon. All of this was after Cambodia though. Wayne



\* \* \* \* \*

*From 65<sup>th</sup> Engineer Section AAR & LL*

*- During the quarter, Company B continued work at Operations Base Lynch and several fire support bases during the quarter. Throughout the entire quarter, Company B continued upgrading and developing OB Lynch, on which work had begun in early July. All sections of the defensive perimeter were improved, including the berm line, fields of fire, and defensive wire emplacements.*

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*- From 725 Maintenance Battalion Section -- - Support realignment for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade was effected following the move from OB Lynch with Company C replacing Company D and moving from Cu Chi to Xuan Loc. The majority of support was provided from that location; and in addition, a forward support detachment was established at OB Lynch.*

*From Division Yearbook Vietnam 1970*

*"Late summer and autumn saw an appreciable change in the Division's area of operation.... The 2<sup>nd</sup> Bde moved west to an area by Vung Tau near the South China Sea. Here they set up Operations Base Lynch."*

\* \* \* \* \*

## **WITHDRAWAL**

On 9 Jun 69 President Nixon met Pres Thieu at Midway Island and they agreed to the first withdrawal of U.S. troops, 25,000 men. On 13 July of that year Company C, 3d Marine Tank Battalion, became the first U.S. armor unit to leave RVN as it boarded its ships. Withdrawals continued at an increasing rate, even while large-scale operations such as the 1970 Cambodia incursion and the enemy offensive of early 1972 were in progress. From the first, planners held back armored units: tanks, Air Cav, ground cavalry, and mechanized infantry. As Divisions and Brigades left RVN, their armored units remained behind. Their [armored/tracked] mobility and firepower made them the logical choice for operations over extended areas, rearguard, delay, and economy of force roles. Thus, when the 9th Inf Division departed in 1969, the 2/47th Infantry (Mech), and the 3/5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry remained behind. Almost every Air Cavalry unit remained in RVN until early 1972.

These armored, and airmobile, units provided a maximum of firepower and mobility with a minimum of U.S. troops. By the end of 1970, with the withdrawal of US units in high gear, 14 armored/mechanized battalions and squadrons remained in RVN, representing 54 percent of the U.S. maneuver battalions still in Vietnam.

According to the MACV Command History 1970, Volume 1, “The most dramatic event of the war in 1970 was the combined US/RVNAF cross-border operation . . . The Cambodia operation was a catalyst allowing the US to meet more readily its 1970 goals, i.e. to Vietnamize the war, lower the number of US casualties, withdraw US forces on schedule, and stimulate a negotiated settlement of the war. All four goals were interrelated . . . Because of the success of allied tactics and the pressure on sanctuaries, the enemy changed strategy, reverting to guerrilla warfare and economy-of-force operations . . .” [See Concept of Ops Section]

#### **4<sup>th</sup> BATTALION, 23<sup>RD</sup> INFANTRY (MECHANIZED) STAND-DOWN**

On 12 October 1970, US 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division received its Keystone message directing redeployment, and published Division Redeployment Order 183-70 on 15 October 1970. The 1st and 3rd Brigades were to stand down during November while the [former US 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division – ed.] 2nd Brigade was to remain in Vietnam operating east of Saigon in Bien Hoa, Long Khanh and Phuoc Tuy Provinces, with the unit designation **2nd BRIGADE**. 2nd Brigade remained in-country operating east of Saigon in Bien Hoa, Long Khanh and Phuoc Tuy Provinces as part of Op Toan Thang IV.

On 24 October, 1970 three Tomahawks were killed in action, all apparently from **Bravo Company** as noted in the earlier After Action Report summary. These were the last Members lost in the Republic of Vietnam according to the U.S. Army database. Note, however, that there is unusual data supplied for **Vernon Z. Johns**, an MIA captured from **Bravo Company**. He is reported having a date of casualty as 5 February, 1968, and he is confirmed expiring on 5 July 1978. He was Missing In Action from the former to the latter date.

Enemy units in the 2nd Brigade’s AO were the 274 NVA Regiment, 74 NVA Artillery Regiment and 84 Rear Service Group, in the first week of November 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigades began standing down. They continued to stand down during the last two weeks of November 1970. On 25 November, the 25th Infantry Division held its Farewell Ceremony at Cu Chi Base Camp attended by Gen Abrams, CONUSMACV, Gen Do Cao Tri, III CT Commander, as well as by remaining US 25th Infantry Division members and GVN troops.

On 8 November 1970, USARV General Order 10719 established the 2nd Brigade as “Independent” OPCON to II Field Force, Vietnam. It continued operating in Phuoc Tuy, Long Khanh and Bien Hoa (Nhon Trach district) Province during the second week of Nov with three maneuver Battalion’s targeted against the 274 NVA Regiment, 74 NVA Artillery Regiment and the 84th Rear Service group. The enemy

continued to avoid contact and concentrated on political re-indoctrination and training in preparation for renewed combat activity in Dec.

1st and 3rd Brigades continued to stand down during the last two weeks of Nov. On 25 November, 25th Inf Division held its Farewell Ceremony at Cu Chi Base attended by Gen Creighton Abrams, CONUSMACV, General Do Cao Tri, III CT Commander, as well as by 25th Infantry Division and GVN members. [Note: the units would not stand down and be returned to CONUS/USARHAW intact. Rather, they were "administratively" returned while men with sufficient time left on their rotation were reassigned to other units to be stood down or removed later.

On 6 December 1970 the Tropic Lightning Division began leaving RVN for Schofield Barracks. 2nd Brigade continued operating in Bien Hoa (Nhon Trach District), Long Khanh and Phuoc Tuy Province during 15-21 November with three maneuver Battalions. Enemy activity was light in the 2nd Brigade's AO, with 12 incidents reported of which one was an attack by fire, nine were ground attacks, one was terrorism, and one was aircraft receiving ground fire. In general, enemy activity remained low during the rest of the commitment in RVN as the enemy generally avoided contact, engaging instead in resupply and other admin activities.

2nd Brigade left RVN on 30 April 1971.

\* \* \* \* \*

25th Infantry Division Operation Report & Lessons Learned dated 1 February, 1971, still shows 4th Bn, 23rd Inf (Mech as a "Combat Element," (Must be a technicality - ed.)

\* \* \* \* \*

*The US 25th Infantry Division served gallantly for 1,716 days in the Republic of Vietnam receiving participation credit for eleven Vietnam campaigns, and being twice awarded both the US Valorous Unit Award and the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm. Eight Tropic Lightning units were awarded Presidential Unit Citations and eleven received one or more Valorous Unit Awards.*

\* \* \* \* \*

2/28/03

*I can give the Official Historical account of the "Tomahawks" but, that is as far as my info allows. From what I have heard, it was handled just like when we arrived and some of the guys swapped the 4th Division patches for the 25th Division.*

*Anyone with time left after December of 1970 was just sent to another unit to finish out his tour. In other words they didn't pull out of Vietnam as a unit, we just DEROSd home and left everything for the ARVN... Including our "Colors" dumped in a trash barrel behind Division HHC (which is another sad but interesting story)...*

*Rick class of 69*

*24 Oct, 2012  
4th Battalion (Mechanized) 23rd Infantry Regiment  
25th Infantry Division  
329 men Killed in Action in Vietnam May 6, 1966 to October 24, 1970  
1 man Killed in Iraq  
11 men Killed in Afghanistan  
42 years ago today the Tomahawks cased the colors and departed Vietnam  
Doug 9*

\* \* \* \* \*

Editor's note: I wasn't sure where to put these comments (below) quoted below from Tet: Understanding the Surprise, by Ronnie Ford, 1995. [Believed attributed to CIA Special Assistant for Vietnam Affairs, George Allan. Let it serve as a brief wrap-up (from one perspective anyway) of the conflict.

They (the North Vietnamese leaders) accomplished what I believe was their purpose, i.e. moving the principal arena of the struggle from the battlefield to the peace table . . . Their top leaders were prepared to recognize – to themselves – that their people's war doctrine had proven false, that there might be limitations of 'national liberation' wars if the United States were willing to commit resources large enough to make them too costly [to the national liberators – ed.] But they could not acknowledge defeat . . .

## **LOOKING BACK**

### **COLLATING AND SELECTING MATERIAL FOR THIS WORK**

In general, events described are in roughly chronological order, within calendar years. There will be some overlap in the detail, and occasional jumping back and forth because the material itself was organized that way. To go strictly by date would have caused a loss of continuity in either task, operation, or parent organization, so I picked one that seemed to cause the least confusion / make the most sense.

The worst was mid 1967 where operations appeared to be Province- and Task oriented, with occasional OPCONs. Operations were found to contain sub-operations, reports were often by Battalion, Brigade, and Division, and references to 4/23 could crop up in any of them, in any sub-section.

Another snaggle was in late 67 Operations Yellowstone, Wilderness, and Saratoga which were Brigade Ops that continued into the Tet Offensive, and they were assigned (generally) by Province TAORs. AND, I found individual Battalions were OPCON'd to different Brigades throughout. Also on the Tet onset, 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion 23<sup>rd</sup> Inf (Mech) was under 25<sup>th</sup> Division control for a time so did not appear in other Brigade reports. Later it was under II FF commander for unclear periods. and Task Force Daems. It in turn seemed to be 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade controlled, and during the period 4/23<sup>rd</sup> was OPCON too all 3 Brigades. Later on, Daems phased out and Thoang Thang I phased in, appearing to me to represent an early stage of Vietnamizing under a Combined Operation name. Still, some references to **TOMMAHAWKS** in any or all of these. Later 68 we seemed to stabilize under 1<sup>st</sup> Bde, but some OPCONs could still be found.

It was a constant state of learning for the editor not only what information we had, but where I put it. I found some entries in chronological order but in the wrong year. Also I realized it had confusing shifts if time or place. I tried to get organize it to be minimally confusing. If you're consider this and are still baffled, please let me know on that too. Proofreading always results in corrections, and the corrections sometimes have errors, so proofreading and correcting can go on forever in the proverbial ever decreasing spirals. .It also caused quite a bit of learning on the editorial part what scraps of after action reports or other accounts applied red to what time period, and I did some reshuffling as we got clearer on Two Tet Offensives, and other types of confusions. In relooking at it "making sense" without dumb mistakes on my part, I hope I have it straight. Anyone catching an error please let me know and we can work it out.

## MEMORIES

*May 24, 06*

*Spook: When I first joined this group I had a similar memory about you. When we were still a "leg" unit we were crossing a large field, not a rice patty, more like a cow pasture. About 50 meters away someone tripped a grenade size booby trap and had one foot messed up pretty bad or so I thought. I think I remember when he was being carried to the chopper he waved at us. I could have sworn that was you.*

*Don Hansen*

*May 25, 06*

*Brock, roger on forgetting or adding stuff to the stories. This site has helped me remember things that had completely slipped my mind. I still get some of it mixed up though, especially locations & dates. Mick & Fred have straightened me out on some of it though. Gene has been a great help on what happened right after I left, he was driving for Richard the day he was killed. Richard & Gene volunteered for the mission that day rather than let someone else take the 51 track since theirs was broke down. From your earlier postings I'm sure you recall that day at Ap Cho.*

*From what I understand Jon is a professional speaker & has his own website but I must have deleted it, tried but couldn't find it on my saved stuff. From what I*

remember about his site he's a pretty busy fellow. Mick says he'll meet up with me here & go to Okla. with me, if he does I'll be there  
Roy

May 25, 06

Roy, Good. I'll be glad to see you.

About what you said about trying to remember stuff after all these years, Isn't it funny how you tried to forget the things that you want to remember now? I remember that night when the guy's got killed at the Village.

The way I remember it was we had Dreadnaught Tanks with us and they had those high powered beams searching the Village. Scared me to death. Went back into same place a few nights later wondering if it was going to be the same thing all over again. See you soon.

Brock

Feb 17, 2012

Donn:

I thought your name sounded familiar. I'm glad you made it through that mad-house. I think I might have the dates wrong on AP CHO. It might have been the 11th-14th of February 1968. What date were you wounded? You must have known Frank Beavers a fellow medic with B. He was killed on the 14th. Howard Goldin, a trooper with B has written me off and on. Did you know him? I know the CO of B was killed the first part of Feb during TET but can't remember his name?

I wish I had a dollar for every suture I either put in or took out that year. Very glad you made it home and can share our stories with fellow Tomahawks.

Hey Joel, you must know the dates of that battle better than me!!

Doc John

Nov 25, '13

On the annual major holidays my mind courses back. Once it was a few years, but now decades. In October '68 I had left the 25th Division, fired with enthusiasm (that can and should be taken two ways!) and gone to MACV to be on a Mobile Advisory Team (MAT). A MAT consisted to two combat arms officers, an E-6 small arms specialist, an E-7 mortarman, and an E-7 medic. I think they were fashioned loosely on Special Forces A-Teams. Only, with our numbers we were A-Team Lite. MACV had given every division a quota of officers and NCOs to provide to the new program aimed at putting American advisory teams with as many RF-PF (Regional Forces - Popular Forces) units as possible. Although the divisions were supposed to send their best, human nature being what it was, most of us were cast-offs for one reason or another. Our team Captain had been a 3/4 Cav platoon leader who had been promised a choice staff job if he would extend for a year. He did, took the month's leave that came with the extension, and on return found his plum job had gone to another officer. When he complained, he was "volunteered" to MACV for his year-long extension. Our light-weapons NCO wasn't a particularly impressive guy and our medic, who began his career in the Battle of the Bulge, was best friends with Jim Bean. He had been promised a job in major field hospital, but was now back in the

field. Our NCO mortarman was outstanding and I never understood how he came to be let go by any of the divisions. He really was the "best" that MACV was asking for.

In mid-November '68 we were assigned to Tan An Prov. and further assigned to Ben Luc District where we pitched a tent and grounded our Conex container of stuff on an ARVN compound under the south approach to the Ben Luc Bridge over the Van Co Dong River ("Oriental River"). For the next several weeks we patrolled with ARVN units before we began a series of rotations among RF-PF units in Ben Luc District.

At that time the 9th Infantry Division occupied the north approach to the Ben Luc Bridge. The bridge was built in 1890 by the Eiffel Corporation of Paris. There was a cast iron plaque riveted to a girder on the north end to that effect (and to this day I wish I had done a midnight requisition of that historic plaque and sent it home - the bridge was taken down after '75 and I assume that plaque went to the scrap metal yard with everything else.) This was an important bridge. The only one over the Van Co Dong along Highway 4 from Saigon to the Delta. During Tet the communists had blown a section of the bridge into the river. That had been replaced and major bucks had been spent since building pier protection around the bridge. RMK-BRJ, the huge contractor, had barges and cranes on the river pile-driving I-beams into the river bed to build buffers around every support. We had occasional interaction with the 9th infantry unit on the other side of the bridge. Mostly sharing plans so we wouldn't be working the same AO and shooting at each other. But shortly before Thanksgiving, they sent someone over to our side of the bridge inviting us to join them for Thanksgiving. So we did.

They had a chow line set up along the side of the road. Turkey and all the fixings had been prepared, as is a long-standing tradition in our military wherever we find ourselves on Mother Earth and the third Thursday in November. What really impressed me were the men who had drawn KP duty that day. Every man serving portions of the dinner to the Soldiers passing along the line was an officer. They ranged from Major to Lieutenant. A lot of Captains. I was accustomed to the practice that officers, and senior NCOs, didn't go through the chow line until all of the Soldiers had, but I had never seen this before. The first to be served were the cooks and regular KPs. The officers remained on the serving line until every Soldier was fed. I was impressed.

The warm-fuzzy feelings for the 9th ID lasted a few days until a 9th ID pilot in a LOH mistook our column of ARVN for NVA and fired on us with a mini-gun. He was in the wrong AO.

So Thursday, when we gather at my brother-in-laws home, I will relish the company of loved ones, but recall the camaraderie, kindness and mutual respect that a bunch of Americans shared on a bridge approach in Long An Province forty-five years ago.

I hope that each of you will enjoy your Thanksgiving and your families and recall other good times shared in many places and with many people over the years.  
Happy Thanksgiving my Tomahawk Brothers!  
Butch

## **VALOROUS UNIT AWARDS (2)**

Criteria: The Valorous Unit Award may be awarded to units of the Armed Forces of the United States for extraordinary heroism in action against an armed enemy of the United States while engaged in military operations involving conflict with an opposing foreign force or while serving with friendly foreign forces engaged in an armed conflict against an opposing armed force in which the United States is not a belligerent part for actions occurring on or after 3 August 1963. The Valorous Unit Award requires a lesser degree of gallantry, determination, and esprit de corps than that required for the Presidential Unit Citation. Nevertheless, the unit must have performed with marked distinction under difficult and hazardous conditions in accomplishing its mission so as to set it apart from the other units participating in the same conflict. The degree of heroism required is the same as that which would warrant award of the Silver Star to an individual. Extended periods of combat duty or participation in a large number of operational missions, either ground or air, is not sufficient. This award will normally be earned by units that have participated in single or successive actions covering relatively brief time spans. It is not reasonable to presume that entire units can sustain Silver Star performance for extended time periods under the most unusual circumstances. Only on rare occasions will a unit larger than a battalion qualify for this award.

Background: a. As a result of a request from the Commander, USMACV, to expand the scope of the Meritorious Unit Commendation to include acts of valor, a review in 1965 had concluded that a gap existed in the awards program. The Distinguished Unit Citation was awarded for gallantry in action for heroism that would warrant the Distinguished Service Cross to an individual, issued by the President. There was no lesser unit award for heroism. Based on the study, a recommendation was submitted to expand the scope of the Meritorious Unit Commendation to include acts of heroism. The recommendation was disapproved by the DCSPER and in a memorandum to the CSA, dated 7 January 1966, the DCSPER recommended a Valorous Unit Award be adopted to signify unit gallantry in combat to a degree equivalent to that required for award of a Silver Star to an individual. The recommendation with proposed design was approved by the Chief of Staff, Army, on 12 Jan, 1966.

b. The emblem is worn by all members of a cited organization and is considered an individual decoration for persons in connection with the cited acts, and may be worn whether or not they continue as members of the organization. Other personnel may wear this decoration while serving with an organization that has been awarded the Valorous Unit Award.

c. Order of precedence and wear policy for unit awards is contained in AR 670-1. Policy for awards, approving authority, and supply of the unit award emblem is contained in AR 600-8-22. The policy for display of unit awards on guidons and flags and supply of streamers is contained in AR 840-10.

## **CASUALTIES**

The U.S. Army paid a high price for its long involvement in RVN. US military deaths exceeded 58,000, and of these, about two-thirds were Army. The majority of the



dead were low-ranking enlisted men (E-2 and E-3), young men twenty-three years old or younger. Most died from small-arms fire and gunshot, but almost 30 percent were from mines, booby traps, and grenades. Artillery, rockets, and bombs accounted for only a small portion of the total fatalities. But for the unprecedented medical care provided in RVN, the death toll would have been higher.

Nearly 300,000 Americans were wounded, half of them requiring hospitalization. The lives of many men who would have been fatalities in earlier wars were saved by rapid helicopter evacuation directly to hospitals. Here, relatively secure from air and ground attack, usually unencumbered by mass casualties, and with access to whole blood, doctors and nurses employed the latest medical technology to save thousands of lives. As one medical officer pointed out, the Army was able to adopt a "civilian philosophy of casualty triage" that directed the "major effort first to the most seriously injured." But some who served in RVN suffered more insidious damage from adverse psychological effects of combat, or the long-term effects of exposure to chemical agents. And, more than a decade after the end of the war, 1,761 Americans remained missing in action. (From: Ch 28 "U.S. Army In Vietnam," American Military History, Center For Military History.)

Casualties{KIA or as later termed KHA – ed.] incurred By Month by **4<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry** , list dated Feb 27 08, compiled from the "Coffelt", index/not responsible for omissions or errors from their data. -- Donn McM

4th 23rd arrives in country 29 April 1966

May 1966	- 10 kia	
June 66	- 3 kia	
July 66	- none	
August 66	- 1 kia	
September 66	- 3 kia	
October 66	- 4 kia	
November 66	- 2 kia	regular infantry
-----		
December 66	- 1 kia	mechanized infantry
January 67	- 1 kia	
February 67	- 3 kia	
March 67	- 1 kia	
April 67	- 7 kia	
May 67	- 2 kia	
June 67	- 5 kia	
July 67	- 10 kia	
August 67	- 6 kia	
September 67	- 6 kia	
October 67	- 3 kia	
November 67	- 1 kia	
December 67	- 5 kia	
January 68	- 13 kia	
February 68	- 25 kia	

March 68 - 16 kia  
April 68 - 18 kia  
May 68 - 28 kia  
June 68 - none  
July 68 - 5 kia  
August 68 - 13 kia

September 68 - 17 kia  
October 68 - 1 kia  
November 68 - none  
December 68 - 4 kia  
January 69 - 3 kia  
February 69 - 3 kia  
March 69 - 7 kia  
April 69 - 1 kia  
May 69 - 3 kia  
June 69 - 15 kia  
July 69 - 2 kia  
August 69 - none  
September 69 - 3 kia  
October 69 - 5 kia  
November 69 - 2 kia  
December 69 - none  
January 70 - 4 kia  
February 70 - 1 kia  
March 70 - 3 kia  
April 70 - 1 kia  
May 70 - 1 kia  
June 70 - 4 kia  
July 70 - 2 kia  
August 70 - 1 kia  
September 70 - 1 kia  
October 70 - 3 kia  
4/23<sup>rd</sup> left country 8 December 1970

## **ON U.S. PLAN OF ESCALATION AND U.S. CONCEPT(S) OF OPERATIONS**

As early as June, 1963 Gen Westmoreland was stressing the need for additional forces in response to Dept of State questioning the seriousness of the situation in SVN. Forces requested were 2 US Marine Bns, 1 ROK Division, a US Airmobile Div, retention of 173<sup>rd</sup> Bde (Abn), plus tactical fighters, a Corps HQs, support personnel, AND possible additional requests beyond these.

From Pentagon Papers, Vol 4, Chapter 2). The concept was originally formulated by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Concept for Vietnam, JCSM 652-65 dated 27 Aug 65:

The objective in Vietnam, as stated by NSAM 288 dated 17 Mar 64 visualized a three-phase strategy:

Phase I - Commit US/FWMA forces necessary to halt the losing trend by end of 1965.

Phase II - Resuming the offensive by US/FWMA forces during the first half of 1966 in high priority areas necessary to destroy enemy forces, and re-institute rural construction activities.

Phase III - If the enemy persists, a period of a year to year and a half following Phase II would be required for defeat and destruction of remaining enemy forces and base areas. Specific military tasks were associated with the objective of each phase.

Phase I:

- (1) Secure major military bases, airfields and communications centers.
- (2) Defend major political and population centers.
- (3) Conduct offensive operations against major VC base areas to divert and destroy VC main forces.
- (4) Provide adequate reserve reaction forces to prevent loss of secure and defended areas.
- (5) Preserve and strengthen the RVNAF.
- (6) Provide adequate air support, both combat and logistic.
- (7) Maintain an anti-infiltration screen along the coast and support forces ashore with naval gunfire and amphibious lift.
- (8) Provide air and sea lifts as necessary to transport necessary but minimum supplies and services to the civil populace.
- (9) Open necessary critical lines of communication for essential military and civil purposes.
- (10) Preserve and defend, to the extent possible, areas now under effective governmental control.

Phase II:

- (1) All Phase I measures.
- (2) Resume and/or expand pacification. Priority will be given to Hop Tac area around Saigon, to that part of the Delta along an east-west axis from Go Cong to Chau Doc, and in the provinces of Quang Nam, Quang Tri, Quang Ngai, Binh Dinh and Phu Yen.
- (3) Participate in clearing, securing, reserve reaction and offensive operations as required to support and sustain resumption of pacification.

Phase III:

- (1) All Phase I and II measures.
- (2) Provide additional forces necessary to extend and expand clearing and securing operations throughout the entire populated area of RVN and forces necessary to destroy VC forces and base areas.

## TYPES OF U.S. OPERATIONS

These models represent purpose rather than technique. Given the wide diversity of terrain, weather and enemy throughout RVN, commanders who unimaginatively applied ideal models to less than ideal conditions were more likely to fail than succeed. Innovation and diversity were the rule rather than the exception, and orthodox procedures were often revised to meet unconventional situations.

For most ground commanders, the primary purpose of ground tactical operations was to defeat enemy forces. Consequently, "find, fix, fight, and finish" the enemy became a much-repeated slogan. The goal of destroying enemy forces eventually assumed a greater importance than the theoretical sequence of search-and-destroy or clear and secure ops. The VC / NVA's great mobility and unpredictability frequently forced free world forces to conduct search -and-destroy ops or fight major battles in areas supposedly freed from most enemy influence.

The first type [with direct US troop involvement] was "search and destroy." "The infantry's traditional attack mission: locate the enemy . . . bring him to battle, and either destroy him or force him to surrender. " Many variations could be conducted from day to weeks long; from company to multi-division level, though the norm was to strike with multi-battalions once the enemy had been encountered with smaller unit probes, patrols, or searches. "Horseshoes" could be formed by placing units in blocking positions, and then a ground thrusts could drive into the center of the horseshoe. Or, in a "hammer and anvil" operation, a blocking position could be occupied, and an attacking force could move toward it. Another variation involved placing ambushes along likely avenues of escape.

When an allied force moved into the area, escaping enemy units were ambushed. Straightforward attacks were made by ground forces into enemy base areas seeking to make contact and inflict heavy casualties on the enemy. All attempted to employ bombing and artillery against enemy "human assaults" to save lives [ours] to the maximum extent and maximizing enemy casualties. It maintained the "attrition" part of ground warfare while foregoing the "advancing army occupying ever growing real estate" component. As previously mentioned, it combined a strategic defense with a tactical offensive.

In April, 1968, the Army dropped the term "search and destroy" since it was beginning to be equated in public opinion with aimless searches and wanton destruction of property. 140 terms, such as combat sweep, recon in force, and spoiling attack replaced the doctrinal term "search and destroy," though "search and destroy" was still used informally.

"Clearing" ops, sometime called 'search and clear', abbreviated S&C, or "Clear and Hold", resembled S&D ops, but they usually placed more emphasis on pacification and the Civil Affairs units. While search-and-destroy ops chased the enemy from an area or destroyed him, clearing ops kept him off balance and allowed the GVN to extend its influence into the area. Recon in force, combat sweeps or other offensive ops continued during clearing, but the emphasis was on eliminating local or main force enemy resistance and destroying his support base. With effective GVN police help, these efforts emphasized interrogation and identification of civilians. They also included civic action programs such as medical attention to demonstrate commitment to protect the civilian population and to maintain control within an area.

“Reconnaissance in force” is a post-1968 euphemism for “search and destroy,” possibly larger scale, adopted as noted above.

“Jitterbugging” is a slang term referring to airlifting platoons into areas of suspected enemy presence to make contact/draw fire, upon which additional larger forces are on standby to reinforce. If no contact occurs in 30 minutes, the initial unit is withdrawn and re-set somewhere else. On average, 1t took 12-18 of these to produce a “successful” contact. [Per Maj Gen Harris Hollis debrief.]

“Road Runner” operations were done by cavalry or mechanized units in advance of convoys to engage any waiting ambushes and to find obvious signs of planting of a mine since the last convoy or sweep. Earlier in the war, the armor had stayed with the convoys, but that was felt to be unproductive use of them as resources, and the same effect could be achieved by running the trucks escorted, with armored forces and air support on standby if needed.

Before mid-1968, operations were also roughly divided according to whether they were “combat” or “civil affairs” in mission. Generally the US focused on combat and the AFRVN on Pacification/Civil Affairs. After mid-1968, the favored term was full-spectrum operations, or “One war strategy”, meaning both the US and AFRVN forces had both missions.

Paraphrasing the JSC concept of the One War strategy, the allies would all join in a round-the-clock attack against the enemy, combining combat operations, pacification, and RVN armed force improvements, all of equal priority.

\* \* \* \* \*

A second view of operations might be to contrast the traditional mode of thinking of armies as finding, fixing, and destroying the enemy as the means to taking and holding ground which was then possessed of a “front”, which advanced as the enemy was progressively destroyed, in turn holding more ground, and so on until the enemy runs out of ground and the more successful army “wins.” Instead, owing to the type of terrain and vegetation found in Vietnam, the doctrine of warfare employed by the foe, and sanctuaries available across an arbitrary national border, the “weaker” side could put its forces to best use by striking at the time and place of THEIR choosing, then melting away, rather like the “Minute men” in America fighting the mighty British Army who, despite fewer professional soldiers and less equipment and organized maneuvering ability, prevailing by focusing their strengths on British weaknesses – not British strengths. In other words, via “asymmetric”, unconventional, “guerilla” means – at least initially. Thus the US quickly found themselves using the coined term, “Area War” as identified in a study published 28 March 67 entitled “Mechanized and Armor Combat Operations in Vietnam”, referred to as MACOV, a “training information” document.

“The III CTZ containing the major population center of Saigon, the political heart of RVN is flanked by dense Mangrove swamps and extensive piedmont jungle growth. The hardcore enemy units, predominantly Vietcong [up to 1967 usually – ed.] have developed a series of long-established base areas and a deeply entrenched infrastructure . . . “

Later on, the MACOV study begins a discussion (p. 50) on “Area Warfare.” “The warfare presently being conducted in RVN has been variously described as non-

lineal, multi-directional, unconventional or area warfare . . . [which] results when armed forces seeking to achieve control of the population of a country are unable to, or do not desire to conduct military operations in the traditional sense, i.e. by the seizure of a succession of terrain objectives while maintaining a continuous front line.” (p. 50) “Doctrine related to area war is incomplete.” (p.. 52.) And, on p. 53, “The M113 armored personnel carrier is being employed by U.S. armor and mechanized infantry units in a tank-like role . . . With the emergence of the M113 as a fighting vehicle, armor scout and mechanized units are engaging the enemy in mounted combat; current doctrine prescribes this form of combat only for tank units.” This turned the traditional (and then-current doctrine for European-style operations) on its head, with the mechanized infantry brought in to destroy enemy units that have been found and fixed by other type units rather than the other way round.

Of course, not only the mech infantry was found as a means of bringing increased firepower to bear on enemy once found and theoretically fixed. Artillery was also early recognized to be at a premium, as were helicopter gunships, TAC-AIR (Air Force or other fighter-bombers, remote electronic sensors, communications intercepts, high altitude imagery, and), and B-52s, the high-technology, strategic intercontinental nuclear bomber found to be superbly adapted to raining conventional “iron bombs” on the enemy wherever he may be located. Then, as illustrated in the foregoing, ground troops swept the area to count bodies and collect any leftover materiel.

\* \* \* \* \*

A third perspective exists according to the type of weapons or “means” of conducting operations, such as “air mobility” versus ground mobility, and within even ground mobility, whether dismounted or “mounted.” This, yet again, leads to a further distinction of type of “mount” such wheeled trucks, half tracks, or tracked vehicles, and the degree of armor involved such as the M113 as fighting vehicle, or with regular tanks, and tracked artillery..

Over time, consider that at the outset of the war early in the advisory days, the main type of thinking involved might be described as “irregular warfare” employed in “counterinsurgency”, or “COIN” with relatively lightly armed units, on foot. About the same time, the enemy began employing larger units, such a Main Force VC Bns, Regiments, and Divisions directly dispatched from North Vietnam. This phase might be considered to be increasingly “symmetrical” [(to use a recent term – ed.) Most of the early US thinking was along the lines of the U.S. advising /South Vietnamese who would do most of this ‘lower intensity” or conventional fighting, backed up by some U.S. units of what we also now would term light infantry. Relatively heavier units of mechanized infantry and fully armored units were initially believed to be too heavy and cumbersome for “jungled” or “tropical” terrain and ground conditions.

Escalation (on both sides) brought additional large conventional units into contact, increasing the intensity. Originally the U.S. considered heavier vehicles (with correspondingly greater firepower and mobility) to be unsuitable. Experience with these type vehicles and units, however, showed them to be not only suitably adapted for much of the year over much of the terrain, but PREFERABLE due to their protection afforded troops and the additional combat power they carried. Early

deployments saw them intentionally left behind. This quickly changed to deploying them, and converting ground units in-country from foot to mechanized infantry with differing TOEs and strengths. By the time US units were being drawn down, withdrawing Divisions' mechanized infantry, Cavalry, and armor battalions were left behind in-country and formed a greater percentage of remaining combat units than they previously had done.

**4<sup>th</sup> Bn, 23<sup>rd</sup> Inf** themselves illustrate this point having been one of two infantry Battalions formed December, 1965 for deployment via reassignment to 25<sup>th</sup> Inf Div, from the 172<sup>nd</sup> Inf Brigade (Mech) in Alaska. Approximately 50% were previously assigned to 1<sup>st</sup> Bn, 60<sup>th</sup> Inf (Mech), sharing the same base, when the order for deployment was originally received in Dec 65. Since only around 50% of men stationed overseas were eligible for continued overseas duty, and other reasons, the 60<sup>th</sup> Inf was stripped of eligible men to fill out the TOE of the deploying **4<sup>th</sup> Bn, 23<sup>rd</sup> Inf**, and **4<sup>th</sup>/23<sup>rd</sup> Inf** was the first deployed unit in RVN chosen for the switch from "light" to "mechanized" in December, 1966.

\* \* \* \* \*

Lastly, and less obviously, there are the Enemy's operations to be considered. What was thought to have begun as an unconventional war on our side, and a "People's War" in Mao's terminology, and "Protracted War in Gen Giap's, turned out to be fought with rather conventional, modern, non-nuclear weapons: rifles, machine guns, mortars, recoilless rifles, armored personnel carriers, artillery, helicopters, tanks. The consistent feature remained the enemy engaging and disengaging, withdrawing (some say "disappearing") and attacking, with superior familiar knowledge of tunnels, dense woods with trails not visible from the air, and so on. They also had nearby sanctuaries that were politically, and therefore militarily, out of reach almost the entire war. Common sense asks: "How can you win a war when the enemy has only to retreat across imaginary lines to be out of reach?" Each may draw his own conclusion.

After 40 to 50 years, there is yet to be developed an effective conventional military response to "Peoples"/ "Protracted" war."

[Not being conversant with SOECIAL Operations, the editor doesn't go into those, some of which are still classified - nra.]

## WITHDRAWAL / VIETNAMIZATION OPERATIONS

In accordance with the Nixon Administration of continuing support for the RVN while at the same time drawing down our forces and turning the prosecution of the war over to them, these mission goals were added on 31 December 68 to the initially stated ones above, namely for providing assistance to the Republic of Vietnam and its armed forces to defeat the externally directed and supported communist subversion and aggression, and to attain a stable and independent noncommunist government.

- (1) make as difficult and costly as possible the continued support of the VC by North Vietnam, and cause NVN to cease its direction of the VC insurgency . . .
- (2) defeat the VC and NVA in South Vietnam and force withdrawal of the NVA . .
- (3) extend GVN dominion direction and control over all south Vietnam;
- (4) deter Red China's intervention and defeat such intervention if it occurred .....

Later added were goals of preparing the AFVN to assume full responsibility for fighting the war, the steady but orderly drawdown of US forces in-country, and steadily decreasing the US casualty rates as these plans progressed.

## **TET OFFENSIVE**

Even to the date of this work, this remains a subject of contention and analysis. There are a few species of the analyses: 1) From the intelligence point of view, how could the enemy have been that prepared without tipping MACV off? 2) Calling into question of measuring progress in a war by how many of the enemy you kill. 3) more generally, how do we avoid future quagmires. [Not very well I would suggest.]

## **CAMBODIA**

Cambodia was the most frustrating puzzle to me. (ed.) There were voluminous after action reports for various named sub-operations and phases, but very little info on 4<sup>th</sup> 23<sup>rd</sup>. The members note being in Cambodia for much of the total time US forces were there, but almost zero specific reference by brigades including 25<sup>th</sup> Division (1st and Second Brigades), First Inf Division, First Air Cav, 11<sup>th</sup> Armored Cav, II US Field Forces, MACV Reports, nor on any of the field maps appended to any official reports and named operational reports. I can only conclude the 4th Battalion 23rd Infantry (Mech) participated OPCON, as an orphan within larger units.

## **INSIGHTS & LESSONS LEARNED**

Abstracted broadly from Vol. 6, Operational Analyses, in the BDM Corp's, Study of Strategic Lessons Learned In Vietnam, dated 1980. [BDM has been described as a "JCS/Pentagon Think Tank,"] The study looked at "how can one win most of the battles and still lose the war?" In analyzing more finite military categories of prosecuting that war, it questions how we framed the meaning of those terms.

INSIGHTS: 1) It seems to have been a war of "leaders" v "managers;" "artistic / traditional" v "scientific" approach. 2) Despite the great credit given to US troops and leaders' skill and tenacity at all levels, the US came up short in several areas: a. Early attempts at aid and advice failed to understand the nature of the enemy, b) We ignored much of the French experience, and failed to learn from French Lessons Learned, c) US Air and Ground strategies were severely and unnecessarily constrained by unsound fears and theories, d) US (& Allies) fought off its "back foot" in a limited war, against an enemy fighting a Total War, e) Up to 1972 US Air Power was improperly employed and at too great a cost in all areas, f) Clandestine



operations were handcuffed from the beginning by US Government limitations & misapplication of special units, g) US overwhelming firepower (heavy-handedness) did not match up well with enemy's more subtle, smaller scale political efforts, h) US/Allied Forces were regionally fragmented, i) The attrition strategy on both sides worked to the NVA/VC long term advantage, j) Allies suffered from lack of unity of command, both in-country, and in the civil v military dimension.

LESSONS: i.) One must accurately appreciate the nature of the conflict is in, ii.) leaders/ managers must listen to the spectrum of thinking available concerning our strengths AND weaknesses, iii.) we have not yet learned how to defeat a People's War, iv.) we must develop and more economical manner for such cases, v.) at a minimum, we should not weaken our own efforts via fragmenting command and resources, to include accepting internal "civilian versus military" line of debate -- on the contrary, the military and civilian leadership must cooperate as the distinction is artificial, vi.) we need to understand that our application of combat power may work against our interests as well as for it, vii.) public support is necessary for ck the use of power projected abroad, and the public attention span is relatively short, viii.) **All ends must serve an AGREED strategy that exploits an opponent weaknesses while capitalizing on an ally's indigenous strength.**

## **EVOLUTION OF ARMOR DOCTRINE**

US warfighting doctrine changed from immediately before the commitment to escalation, through the first year or so of escalation in two ways. One was to recognize the utility and effectiveness of airmobility, and the other was use of armor in tropical terrain quite soon after the onset of stepped up operations in Vietnam. Vietnam WAS tropical and had jungle, and was thus envisioned as a soggy jungle perhaps as encountered along the lowlands in Guadalcanal and New Guinea in WWII. Parts of it were, of course, but much was not.

Up to that point, Infantry Doctrine Manuals had addressed the subjects of low intensity warfare, but in no great detail, and it was [to this editor's eye] a sort of poor relation of high intensity war such as was envisioned on the plains of Europe against the Warsaw Pact forces. US Special Forces envisioned participating in training local forces as a "force multiplier", and to some extent that applied to RVN. But it was widely felt, though debated at the fringes, that heavily armored vehicles would become mired down if they left the relatively exposed hard-surfaced roads, and in all cases serve as liabilities, if not death traps. So they left the heavier combat units and vehicles behind in the States.

Experience in-country quickly disabused those concerned with large scale methods and tactics, and the heavier armed, armored vehicles came to have a premium on them and their use. General Weyand, the 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division Commander at time of deployment, was the first Division CG to insist that he deploy with his armor, Cavalry and mechanized infantry units. He also foresaw with regard to the M113s that the exposed .50 cal machine gun mounted in front of the TC hatch needed shielding and adopted, and procured armor shields for all M113s deploying with Cav

and mech units. When procuring was proving to be very limited “on the Island”, they began fabrication in 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division’s shops.

When their extreme usefulness was discovered (1966), other divisions in-country, such as the 1<sup>st</sup> ID sent for their units that had remained stateside, and divisions readying for deployment brought their organic armor including tracked Cavalry and Infantry with them. Even further, pure-armor units like 11<sup>th</sup> Armored Cavalry regiments deployed from Germany in 1966 en bloc. As mentioned above, the drawdown proceeded in reverse order, armored units being among the last to leave the country.

Even during the height of the involvement, isolated voices were calling for the further switchover of Mechanized Infantry units to Cavalry Units, the latter TOEs providing for many times more APCs per comparable sized unit of men, i.e. squad for squad, Troop for Company, Squadron for Battalion. That idea was never adopted.

Oct 22, 09

NEIL -- ENJOYED AND SAVED THE MECH/CAV DEBATE. WHAT GOES UNSTATED IN THESE DEBATES/ARGUMENTS IS THE ARMY'S UNSPOKEN, DEEP SEATED AND ABSOLUTE SUPPORT FOR THE 'AIR ASSAULT' CONCEPT. IN THE MID 50'S TO EARLY 60'S AIR ASSULT WAS THE END ALL AND BE ALL TO THE ANTICIPATED PROBLEMS THE ARMY WOULD CONCEIVABLY FACE. THE ARMY HAD ADOPTED AIR ASSAULT (AT SOME CONSIDERABLE EXPENSE) AND THAT WAS THE DOCTRINE - PERIOD. I'M CONVINCED THIS ABSOLUTE DOCTRINE PATH SLOWED OR EVEN WORSE, GREATLY RESTRICTED THE INCREASED AND MORE RAPID INTRODUCTION OF MECH INF, ARMD CAV SQDNS AND TANK BNS TO VN. YOUR GREAT WORK RECORD OF THE 'TOMAHAWK ODYSSEY' IS RE PLEAT WITH EXAMPLES OF MECH OR CAV UNITS MOVING TO THE SOUNDS OF THE GUNS (AT NIGHT) AND THE HELOS WERE STUCK IN THEIR LZ'S. YOU DON'T DO CO OR BN AIR ASSAULTS IN THE DARK; AT LEAST BACK THEN. BEST, CAIN B.

\* \* \* \* \*

**4th Battalion (Mechanized), 23d Infantry Regiment,  
25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division**

**List of Commissioned and Warrant Officers,  
and Battalion Command Sergeant Majors 1966-1970**

**1966-1970**

Information sources used were: the National Archive KIA report, Department of Army reports, unit rosters, 25<sup>th</sup> ID After Action Reports and Tropic Lightning articles, 4/23 rosters and Year Books, and recollections of battalion personnel. [Provided by Cliff Neilson, “Mohawk 6”, last half 1968]

## Qualifications

1. Sources differed in spelling the last name. I used the one that made the most sense.
2. Sources differed on the rank held by the individual. They are listed at the lowest rank reported held in Viet Nam. No attempt was made to distinguish between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> lieutenants. They are all listed as lieutenants.
3. Sources differed on the company assignment. If two or more sources had the same individual in two companies, he is listed in one with the second showing after his name.
4. Sources did not always identify the individual's Viet Nam entry year. I made a best estimate.

The sources for 1966, 1968, and 1969 yielded the most names. For some reason, the information for 1967 and 1970 is sketchy. Summary on page 10.

It will benefit us all if the list can be made as accurate and complete as possible. Please review all the names that were there with you and furnish me with any corrections. Additional sources would be useful.

## Explanation of Officer Assignment Practices

1. Each unit in the Army was (and is) organized and equipped in accordance with a Table of Organization and Equipment (TOE). The TOE, uniquely for each type unit, defined the number of personnel; their rank; and their military occupational specialty (MOS) as well as every piece of equipment the unit was authorized to have.
2. When the 4-23 arrived in RVN in August 1966, it was organized as a "straight" infantry battalion under a TOE (whose number I do not know). It was later reorganized as a mechanized unit under MTOE 7-46G; "M" signified "modified" from the regular TOE.
3. MTOE 7-46G authorized 40 officers, 2 warrant officers, and 865 enlisted men.
4. Officer assignment policies to combat units such as the 4-23 during the period 1966-70 were:
  - A. Lieutenant Colonel-6 months. At completion of the 6 months, he was transferred to a higher headquarters or rotated home.
  - B. Major, captain, and lieutenant-12 months.
  - C. It was not unusual for majors, captains, and lieutenants who completed 6 months "on the line" to be transferred to a higher headquarters.

## Battalion Commanders

(Chronologically in the order in which they commanded)

Lt. Col. Michael Barszcz (commanded in Alaska, Hawaii, and in RVN) 28 April 1966-4 July 1966 (deceased 2001)  
 Lt. Col. Louis J. North, 4 July 1966-December 1966  
 Lt. Col. Walworth F. Williams, December 1966-June 1967; (deceased 2004)  
 Lt. Col. Thomas A. Ware, Jr., June-10 December 1967; (deceased 2003)  
 Lt. Col. Avery S. Fullerton, 10 December 1967-12 May 1968; (deceased 1997)  
 Lt. Col. Clifford C. Neilson, 12 May-13 November 1968;  
 Lt. Col. Albert C. Butler, 13 November 1968-22 March 1969; KIA 22 March 1969  
 Lt. Col. George E. Taylor, March-September 1969;  
 Lt. Col. James E. Coggins, September 1969-March 1970;  
 Maj. Frederick S. Stanley, March-April 1970;  
 Lt. Col. Edward M. Bradford, April-November 1970;  
 Maj. Jerry D. Blackwood, November-December 1970.

#### Majors

(By first year in Viet Nam (if known), then alphabetically with first position where XO is Executive Officer and S-3 is Operations Officer.)

1966

Major Albert E. Coast, S-3  
 Major William T. Crim, XO.  
 Major Donald A. Hamlin, S-3  
 Major Gene A. Williams, XO

1967

Major John D. George, S-3  
 Major Arthur H. Seabrook, XO  
 Major Robert E. Spurrier, S-3, XO

1968

Major Thomas McPherson  
  
 Major Orr, S-3  
 Major Alfredo Prieto, Surgeon.  
 Major Donald D. Starnes, XO  
 Major Jeff N. Tuten, XO (deceased)  
 Major Thoniues Robinson, Jr., XO  
 Major Ross W. Winnes, Jr.

1969

Major Igor D. Gerhardt  
 Major Marion E. (Ed) Mann

1970

Major Robert F. Anderson, S-3  
 Major Jerry D. Blackwood, XO, CO

Maj. Frederick S. Stanley, CO

### Captains

(By first year in Viet Nam (if known), then to first company assigned alphabetically by some letter A, B, C, D, Headquarters & Headquarters Company (HHC) following surname indicates company commander. Listed in HHC followed by notation indicates first assignment to battalion staff where S-1 is personnel, S-2 intelligence, AS-3 Assistant Operations Officer, S-4 Logistics, S-5 civil affairs, S-6 communications.

1966

#### A Co.

Captain Clyde A (Lou) Hennies

Captain Leo G. Hopper

Captain Michael D. Isacco

#### B. Co.

Captain Ronald C. Becker

Captain Herbert David Kuhl

#### C Co.

Captain Richard Palmer, HHC

#### HHC.

Captain Willie M. Campbell , S4

Captain Kenneth E. Gilman

Captain Herbert D. Kuhl, B Co

Captain Arthur E. Lewis, (Surgeon) KIA 17 May 1966

Captain William W. Little, B Co

Captain (Keith?) Monaghan ?

Captain Gary E. Roth

Captain Jimmie B. Spivey

Captain Johnny Trammell, C Co

Captain Robert H. Williams

1967

#### A Co.

Captain Gordon R. Lam

Captain William W. Mendel

#### B Co.

Captain James "Jim" P. Hales III, S-3

Captain Don L. Holland, S-3, A Co

Captain Eugene M Korecki, KIA 3 February 1968

#### C Co.

Captain Mike Connor  
Captain William W. Hartzog

HHC.

Captain Charles Baucum, Surgeon  
Captain Jerry Bramlett, S-6  
Captain Norman Newberry, CO  
Captain Donald Tapscott, Motor Off, C Co

1968

A Co.

Captain David D. Beach.

B Co.

Captain Campbell  
Captain William W. Little  
Captain Marlow

C Co.

Captain Cain A. Bridgeman, S-3  
Captain Nixon  
Captain Henry A. Phillips, KIA 22 September 68

HHC

Captain Roy H. Autry, S-6  
Captain George T. Byron, Chaplain  
Captain Willie R. Cage Jr., S-4  
Captain Ronald Cox, S-2, A Co  
Captain Doyle, Surgeon  
Captain William R. Houston Jr., S-2  
Captain Robert B. Johnson, S-1  
Captain Don Just, Chaplain  
Captain Ronald J. Marlow, S-4, B Co  
Captain Pierce, S-5  
Captain Terry S. Schwartz, Surgeon  
Captain Franklin D. Shiplett, HHC CO, S-4 & 1  
Captain Zizman, HHC Co, S-4  
Captain Youngquist, S-6

D Co.

Captain Lincoln, C Co  
Captain Melvin T. Starr.

ATTACHED:

Captain Ken Koy, 7/11 Arty LNO  
Captain Jowers, 7/11 Arty LNO

1969

A Co.

Captain Jon W. Blades  
Captain Robert Berg

B Co.

Captain Luther Dewalt  
Captain Patrick Butler

C Co.

Captain John Aljets.  
Captain Arthur Minnefield

D Co.

Captain Jesus T. Perry, HHQ

HHC.

Captain James E. DeBaise  
Captain Frederick A. Drew, B Co  
Captain Grew Fleming, S-5  
Captain Thomas C. Mallison  
Captain Richard McKinnon  
Captain Terrance (Terry) O'Hare, S-4, C Co  
Captain Maximino Pagan, S-6  
Captain Victor D. Whitney

1970

A Co.

Captain Charles H. R. Kramer  
Captain Parr, HHC  
Captain Robert Zonne

B Co.

Captain B. Horn, D Co  
Captain Frederick Drew

C Co.

Captain Dinklager

D Co

Captain Ned C. Stoll, HHC

HHC.

Captain Mario Crocette, A Co

Captain Robert Forrester, S-6  
Captain Joe Hamby, AS-3  
Captain Tom Mallison, CRIP, PSYOPS  
Captain Panibinaco (sp ?), S-4  
Captain Robert L. Schmidt, S-2, C Co

ATTACHED: Captain Maddox, 7/11 ArtyLNO

Lieutenants

(By first year in Viet Nam (if known), then by company alphabetically by surname.)

1966

A Co.

Lieutenant Boyd B. Burkholder  
Lieutenant Daryl Broussard.  
Lieutenant Joseph F. Henney  
Lieutenant James R. Kopp, C Co  
Lieutenant Robert B. Logan, LNO, C  
Lieutenant Donald K. McBride  
Lieutenant Andrew Zorbis

B Co.

Lieutenant Matthew Durkovitch  
Lieutenant Floyd Holifield, Jr KIA 7 July 1967  
Lieutenant Robert B. Long  
Lieutenant Rodney L. Lutes  
Lieutenant Aubrey R. Merrill, HHC  
Lieutenant Gerald L. Monahan, HHC

C Co.

Lieutenant Armstrong  
Lieutenant Richard M. Cohen  
Lieutenant Richard A. Gradwohl  
Lieutenant William A. Holbrook, HHC  
Lieutenant Thomas Massey  
Lieutenant Lawrence A. Sack  
Lieutenant Anthony J. Seiwert  
Lieutenant Tyrell

HHC.

Lieutenant Robert P. Andrews, Motor Officer, C Co KIA 3 September 1966  
Lieutenant Dale J. Bickert, Commo  
Lieutenant John C. Boinis  
Lieutenant William R. Cochran  
Lieutenant James Larry Denmon, Recon



Lieutenant James A. Fetterman  
Lieutenant Loren Guillemette  
Lieutenant J. F. Henney  
Lieutenant Clyde A. Hennies, A Co  
Lieutenant Ansel L. Huggins, Jr C Co  
Lieutenant Virgil W. Johnson  
Lieutenant Gary Strohm, S-5  
Lieutenant James C. Yarbrough, AS-3

ATTACHED:

Lieutenant Don Condon, Arty FO  
Lieutenant Vaughn, Arty Fo, 7-11

1967

A Co.

Lieutenant Richard Blackburn  
Lieutenant Eugene Duderstadt  
Lieutenant Ancil Fletcher B. Moran  
Lieutenant James McKnight  
Lieutenant Roger Upton  
Lieutenant Ernest J. Wallace, Jr  
Lieutenant Robert G. Willis

B Co.

Lieutenant William F. Downey, Jr  
Lieutenant Floyd R. Holifield KIA 7 July 1967  
Lieutenant Paul Lockard  
Lieutenant David F. May  
Lieutenant Thomas Reinkoler  
Lieutenant Thomas Sutton  
Lieutenant Russ G. Walberg C Co.  
Lieutenant Robert Connor  
Lieutenant Luther Dewalt  
Lieutenant Dave Guilland  
Lieutenant Ronald E. Hines  
Lieutenant Chuck Linfante  
Lieutenant Allen A. Lobeck  
Lieutenant Richard D. Luedke  
Lieutenant Martin Miller  
Lieutenant Thomas L. Nugent  
Lieutenant Stanley F. Patterson, KIA 7 July 1967

HHC

Lieutenant Michael Collins, Med  
Lieutenant Louis W. Hamil, Flame  
Lieutenant John R. Isley, S-1

Lieutenant Don C. Long, S-5  
Lieutenant Gennaro Mellis, Recon., C Co  
Lieutenant Bill E. Overstreet, C Co  
Lieutenant Thomas C. Seitzinger  
Lieutenant Thomas H. Sutton, B Co  
Lieutenant John R. Warne, Mtr

1968

A Co.

Lieutenant Duane E. Anderson  
Lieutenant Lewis Anderson, Jr  
Lieutenant Daniel A. Bartolomei  
Lieutenant Danny L. Blake, KIA 21 August 1968.  
Lieutenant Charles G. "Terry" Bohlinger, 3<sup>rd</sup>, A Co  
Lieutenant William W. Bradley, Recon  
Lieutenant Layne R. Carver  
Lieutenant John J. Day  
Lieutenant James G. Dickson.  
Lieutenant Joe A. Elbert, KIA 13 September 1968  
Lieutenant James T. Ellis  
Lieutenant Wallace D. Foy  
Lieutenant Thomas E. Hirsch  
Lieutenant James R. Hockett, KIA 22 September 1968  
Lieutenant Kenneth Kingery, HHC  
Lieutenant Donald Leta, KIA 13 February 1968  
Lieutenant James F. Mitchell  
Lieutenant Michael F. Pellet  
Lieutenant Paul D. Seaberg  
Lieutenant Morgan J. "Butch" Sincock,

B Co.

Lieutenant Altman, HHC  
Lieutenant William A. Bates  
Lieutenant Paul Belzyk  
Lieutenant Dave Blanchard  
Lieutenant Hector E. Colon  
Lieutenant Walter D. Ham, HHC  
Lieutenant Jeffery Hinckle, S-1  
Lieutenant Ed De Maria  
Lieutenant James A. Pollard  
Lieutenant Jack A. Whetsel, KIA 2 May 1968

C Co.

Lieutenant Carl G. Berning, B Co  
Lieutenant James T. Brewer  
Lieutenant Thomas Mcculloch, Recon

Lieutenant Bill Overstreet  
Lieutenant Donald D. Randall, KIA 2 May 1968  
Lieutenant Joseph Rio  
Lieutenant Alfred V. Schofield, KIA 16 September 1968  
Lieutenant Garold E. Townsend

HHC.

Lieutenant Francis A. Barnes, KIA 25 March 1968  
Lieutenant Gary Bennett, Flame, Recon  
Lieutenant James T. Brewer  
Lieutenant Eugene J. Curless, Jr, Spt  
Lieutenant Milton F. Culp, Recon  
Lieutenant Charles F. Davis  
Lieutenant Thomas E. Dobson  
Lieutenant James D. Farwell  
Lieutenant John C. Grier III  
Lieutenant Louis W. Hamil, KIA 27 March 1968  
Lieutenant John D. Kaiser, AS-4  
Lieutenant Jackie C. Leary (sp?)  
Lieutenant Don C. Long, S-5  
Lieutenant Patrick J. Madison, CRIP  
Lieutenant William McMonagle, A Co  
Lieutenant James F. Mitchell, AS-3  
Lieutenant Henry A. Montgomery, A Co  
Lieutenant Kenneth D. Nelson  
Lieutenant James H. Pearson  
Lieutenant William A. Petram, MedPlt  
Lieutenant Dennis T. Reeder  
Lieutenant Raul J. Selczyk.  
Lieutenant George J. Stafford, Flame  
Lieutenant Henry R Stanton.  
Lieutenant George W. Vessels, Recon  
Lieutenant Russ G. Walberg  
Lieutenant Charles E. Woodbury, S-2.

Attached.

Lieutenant John E. Russell, 7/11 Arty. FO, KIA 21 August 1968  
Lieutenant Sylvain L. White, 7/11 Arty, KIA 27 May 1968

1969

A Co.

Lieutenant Thomas A. Fritzer, KIA 13 October 1969  
Lieutenant Logan (?)  
Lieutenant Danny R. Metz, KIA 11 September 1969  
Lieutenant James E. Knott  
Lieutenant Jack McKnight

Lieutenant David H. Stoppelwerth, KIA 18 January 1970  
Lieutenant Rosow

B Co.

Lieutenant Belzik  
Lieutenant David Howery  
Lieutenant Duane H. Landwehr KIA 6 June 1969  
Lieutenant Michael H. Peterson, KIA 24 January 1970  
Lieutenant Jackie G. Reamy  
Lieutenant Albert Tronzo

C Co.

Lieutenant Kenneth M. Day, Recon  
Lieutenant Earnest Hardimon, Jr. KIA 18 June 1970  
Lieutenant Ronald J. Matel, KIA 9 June 1969  
Lieutenant Victor H. Pritchard, KIA 29 March 1969  
Lieutenant Robert M. Szabo

HHC

Lieutenant Patrick Butler  
Lieutenant Michael L. Cannon  
Lieutenant John P. Chabin, XO  
Lieutenant Oren N. Fleming  
Lieutenant Ulysse C. Jones.  
Lieutenant James W. Kent, Jr.  
Lieutenant Parrot (Parret)  
Lieutenant John H. Peterson  
Lieutenant Dennis T. Reeder, CO  
Lieutenant Robert Renneisen, Flame  
Lieutenant John D. Revier, Recon KIA 21 October 1969.  
Lieutenant Donnie Shelton, Recon  
Lieutenant Terry C. Smith  
Lieutenant Michael Wiggins  
Lieutenant Edward S. Wilkerson

ATTACHED:

Lieutenant John Knox, 7/11 Arty.

1970

A Co.

Lieutenant Paul Hargrove  
Lieutenant Michael J. Rossow  
Lieutenant Steven S. Sarfati  
Lieutenant Richard F. Sforza  
Lieutenant Reginald Smith

B Co.

Lieutenant William D. Hollingshead

C Co.

Lieutenant William R. Fischer, HHC

Lieutenant James

Lieutenant James G. Knott

Lieutenant Gary D. Mann

Lieutenant Jerry Saxe

Lieutenant Robert Schmidt

Lieutenant Edward J. Tobin

D Co.

Lieutenant Robert P. Bob Anderson, Med Plt

Lieutenant Edward Demaria

Lieutenant Brian Dougherty

HHC.

Lieutenant Michael J. Allison, CRIP/Recon.

Lieutenant William "Bucky" Beaver, CRIP

Lieutenant Federman, HHC

Lieutenant James T. Filyaw

Lieutenant Thomas F. Frisby

Lieutenant Claude Garret

Lieutenant Paul Gregg Jones, Recon

Lieutenant Gary D. Mann, C Co

Lieutenant Danford R. Meischer, Flame, B Co

Lieutenant Karl D. Musick, 4.2", HHC

Lieutenant Olsen, Recon

Lieutenant Bruce F. Stangeby.

Lieutenant Edward J. Tobin, C Co

Lieutenant Douglas H. Turner, C Co

Lieutenant Woeppel, S-6

Lieutenant Michael Wiggins, PSYOPS

Warrant Officers

CWO2 Ernest E. Burndt, Jr, 1966.

CWO2 Herbert Byrd, Jr, Motor Officer, 1970

CWO2 Martin L. Conover, Property Book Officer (PBO), 1968

CWO2 William C. Lundon, PBO, 1966.

CWO Jack L. Daniels, Motor Off, 1968.

CWO2 Robert A. Harris, PBO, 1967

CWO2 Robert R. Jackson, 1969

CWO3 William Medeiros, 1969

CWO2 Maurice Smith, PBO, 1970

## Battalion Command Sergeant Majors

BCSM Michael V. Termi 1966  
 BCSM John E. Wise, 1967  
 BCSM James J. Gallagher, 69-70  
 BCSM Robert H. Fugitt, 1970

	Summary*					Total
	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	
LTC	3	2	2	2	1	10
KIA			1			
Maj	4	3	7	2	3	19
Capt	17	11	25	13	12	78
KIA	2		2			4
Lt	34	30	65	36	32	196
KIA	2	9	6	3		20
Total	58	46	99	53	48	304 Serving

KIA 25 Officers of 304 (8.2%)

Does not include CWO or attached Field Artillery officers.

\* \* \* \* \*

### SOME GRID COORDINATES

Base Area 354	XT1090, XT1060, WT8070&8060
bau Co	XT275685
Ben Luc (Op Lanikai fall 66, Long An Prov	XS 6276 (4 digit)
Ben Suc (upper Iron Triangle)	XT549327
Cao Dai Temple	XT241496
CAU KHOI Rubber Plantation	vic XT3135
Citadel area	center of mass XT2720
Crescent	XT3949 (4 digit)
CU CHI	XT6415 / XT 6516 (4 digit)
Dau Tieng Base Camp	XT4947 (4 digit)
Filhol Plantation vicinity	XT66_20_

FSB BRAGG II	XT3358 (4 digit) also XT34358
BUELL on route 4 three km NW TAY NINH	XT213532
Buell II	XY227568
Buell III	XT2153 (4 digit)
Crook	XT0559
CROCKETT II	XT7416 (4 digit)
Grant	XT389 626.
Lynch	YS4486 4 (digit , but varies)
Hunter	XT369 242 also listed at XT3742
KEENE III	XT6001 (4 digit)
MAHONE II in the TRAPEZOID	XT521419
MAURY	XT618022
MITCHELL	XT16-45-
PERSHING	XT5125 (4 digit)
RAWLINS six km E of the city	XT301502
RAWLINS III	XT2948, Bragg II (XT3358)
REED II	XT4712 (4 digit)
Soui Da	XT340583
St. Barbara (at Bau Co)	XT275685
FSB Tomahawk III CTZ (apocryphyphal)	YT 487351 near XUAN LOC
WASHINGTON	XT1456 (4 digit)
Ho Bo Woods vicinity	XT62_30_
Hoc Mon Bridge	XT714072
IRON TRIANGLE (approx, includes)	XT73_19_
Lower Boi Loi Woods	XT5333316
NE Slope Nui Ba Den	XT2860 (4 digit)
PSB DIAMOND	XT337187
DIAMOND II	XT341156
RENEGADE WOODS	XT29x30x
STRAIGHT EDGE WOODS	XT1334 (4 digit)
TAY NINH City	XT1950-2050
Tay Ninh West 25th Inf Division base camp	XT301502
TRANG BANG (approx)	XT5224 (4 digit)
TRUNG LAP	XT556219

## NAMED CAMPAIGNS AND DATES

Streamers: Yellow with green borders and three red stripes centered

Advisory	15 March 1962 - 7 March 1965
Defense	8 March 1965 - 24 December 1965

Counteroffensive	25 December 1965 - 30 June 1966
Counteroffensive, Phase II	1 July 1966 - 31 May 1967
Counteroffensive, Phase III	1 June 1967 - 29 January 1968
Tet Counteroffensive	30 January 1968- 1 April 1968
Counteroffensive, Phase IV	2 April 1968 - 30 June 1968
Counteroffensive, Phase V	1 July 1968- 1 November 1968
Counteroffensive, Phase VI	2 November 1968 - 22 February 1969
Tet 69 / Counteroffensive	23 February 1969 - 8 June 1969
Summer-Fall 1969	9 June 1969 - 31 October 1969
Winter-Spring 1970	1 November 1969 - 30 April 1970
Sanctuary Counteroffensive	1 May 1970 - 30 June 1970
Counteroffensive, Phase VII	1 July 1970 - 30 June 1971
Consolidation I	1 July 1971 - 30 November 1971
Consolidation II	1 December 1971 - 29 March 1972
Cease-Fire	30 March 1972 - 28 January 1973

## **U.S. SMALL ARMS**

(Copied from West, and slightly edited for subsequent weapons issued)

Automatic Pistol Caliber .45, M1911A1 - A recoil-operated, magazine-fed, self-loading hand weapon which weighs approx 3 pounds with a full 7-round magazine; it has sustained rate of fire of 10 rounds per minute and an effective range of 50 meters.

Grenade Launcher, M79 - A single-shot, break-open, breech-loaded, shoulder weapon which fires 40mm projectiles and weighs approx 6 1/2 pounds when loaded; it has a sustained rate of aimed fire of 5-7 rounds per minute and an effective range



of 350 meters. Fired an explosive round having a 5 meter lethal radius. Later a buckshot round with 20, 24-gram pellets. Nicknamed a “duper.”

Hand Grenade, Fragmentation, M26 - A hand-thrown bomb, which weighs approx 1 pound, and contains an explosive charge in a body that shatters into small fragments; it has an effective radius of 40 meters.

Machine Gun, Caliber .50, M2 - A belt-fed, recoil-operated, air-cooled automatic weapon, which weighs approx 80 pounds without mount or ammunition; it has a cyclic rate of fire of 450-550 rounds per minute and an effective range of 1450 meters.

Machine Gun, 7.62mm, M-60 - A belt-fed, gas-operated, air-cooled automatic weapon, which weighs approx 23 pounds without mount or ammunition; it has a sustained rate of fire of 100 rounds per minute and an effective range of 1100 meters.

Mortar, 60mm, M19 - A smooth-bore, muzzle-loaded, single-shot, high angle of fire weapon, weighing 45.2 pounds assembled, firing an assortment of high explosive and pyrotechnic rounds; with max rate of fire of 30 rds per minute, and sustained rate of fire of 18 rounds per minute; the max effective range is 2000 yards.

Mortar, 81mm, M29 - A smooth-bore, muzzle-loaded, single-shot, high angle of fire weapon, weighing 115 pounds assembled, firing an assortment of high explosive and pyrotechnic rounds; with a sustained rate of fire of 2 rds per min, MER of 2200-3650 meters, depending upon the ammunition used.

Mortar, 4.2 inch. M30 was a rifle-barreled, muzzle loading, high-angle fire weapon, weighing 626 lbs including base plate and ring, and sighting equipment. Max effective range 6500 yards.

Recoilless Rifle, 106mm, M40A1 - A single-shot, recoilless, breech-loaded weapon, which weighs approx 438 pounds when assembled and mounted for firing; it has a sustained rate of fire of 6 rounds per minute and an effective range of 1365 meters.

Rifle, cal 5.56mm M16 – gas operated, shoulder-fired, semi-to-full auto rifle, approx 6.5 pounds. Max effective range given as 500 meters. Sustained rate of fire 12-15 rounds per min. Cyclic rate 750-900 rounds per min.

Rifle, Caliber 7.62mm, M14 - A gas-operated, magazine-fed air-cooled, semi-automatic shoulder weapon, which weighs approx 12 pounds with a full 20-round magazine; it has a sustained rate of fire of 30 rounds per minute and an effective range of 460 meters.

Rifle, Caliber 7.62mm, M14-E2 (Modified) - The automatic rifle version of the M14, weighing approx 14 pounds including bipod; having a sustained rate of fire of 40-60

rounds/minute and effective range of 460 meters. Cyclic rate of fire 700 rounds per minute.

Rocket Launcher, 3.5 inch - A single-shot, open-end, shoulder-fired antitank weapon, which weighs approx 22 pounds when loaded; it has a sustained rate of fire of 4 rounds per minute and an effective range of 23 meters against point targets.

Rocket Launcher, HE 66mm, M72 (LAAW) - A disposable, single shot, open-end, shoulder-fired, light antitank weapon, weighing approx 5 pounds loaded; it has an effective range of 250 meters.

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This material is cut/pasted together and edited using Microsoft Word, digested from many sources starting with a chronology from the 25<sup>th</sup> Aviation site entitled Excerpts from the 25th Infantry Red Book 1965-1970, by Patrick McKeand. To this I added excerpts from Bn/ Bde/Div After Action Reports, Division Quarterly Reports, FF II and MACV reports, Center from Military History studies [www.cmh.com] and other documents available from the Virtual Vietnam Archive at:

[<http://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/virtualarchive/>], Pentagon Papers, and elsewhere; and first-hand e-mail accounts from 4/23<sup>rd</sup> Inf "Tomahawk" veterans, bit by bit. I revised, edited, abbreviated for conciseness, and attempted to correct minor errors. The focus is the 4/23<sup>rd</sup> Inf "Tomahawks", with additional info added to give background and context within overall 25<sup>th</sup> Inf Division operations, and the war in general. Like a jalopy built from parts gathered from all over, I take no credit for producing the parts, only for the reassembly and cutting/fitting to suit the purpose. I hope it runs reliably. [Neil Andrews, formerly Sgt E-5, formerly C/4/23, Regular and Mech, 1965-67.]

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### Commanders' Memorials

Feb 23, 07

*[On announcement of General W's death in 2007]*

*When MG W arrived in August 1968, I had commanded the 4-23 for about 3 months. Little did he or I - or some of you guys that were there for the action -- know that shortly we would be engaged in what became know as the Battle of Tay Ninh (I, II, or III depending on when you got to fight for that God forsaken piece of earth).*

*Very early in his tenure he visited all the battalions and gave the commanders this guidance:*

*"Steel is cheap, American flesh & blood is precious. No soldier is to die because someone said the Rules of Engagement specified you (me) could not use every bit of available firepower to keep him alive." And that's what we did.*

*At the first shot-and this was particularly true of convoy ambushes -- we took up defensive positions and brought down the "hammers of hell" on the shooter, his friends, perhaps inadvertently, the villagers with whom he was intermingled and their house he was using for cover. Artillery, helicopter gunships, and tactical air pounded the piss out of them.*

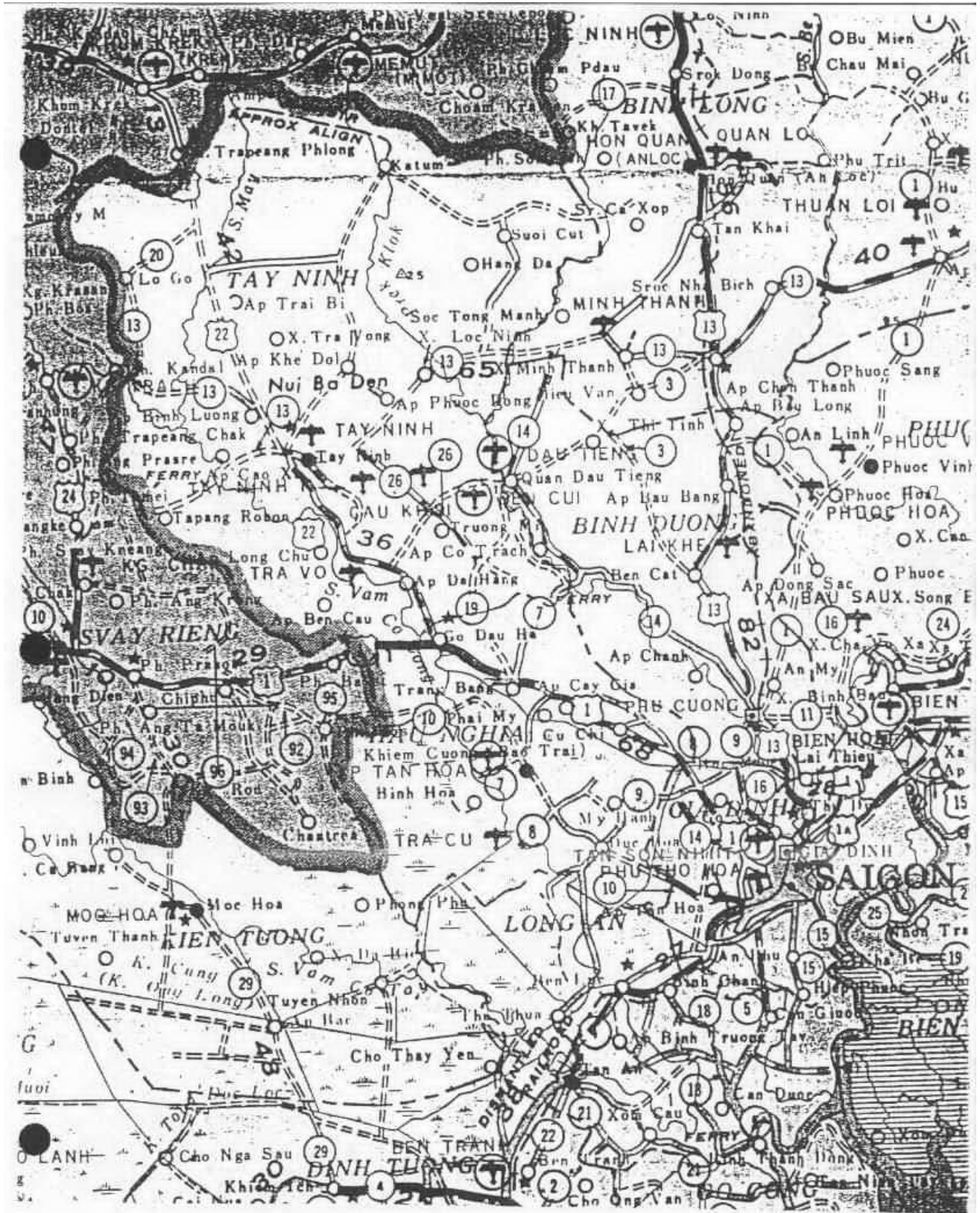
*Then we went back in. If anyone started shooting at us again, we stopped and repeated the process for as long as it took.*

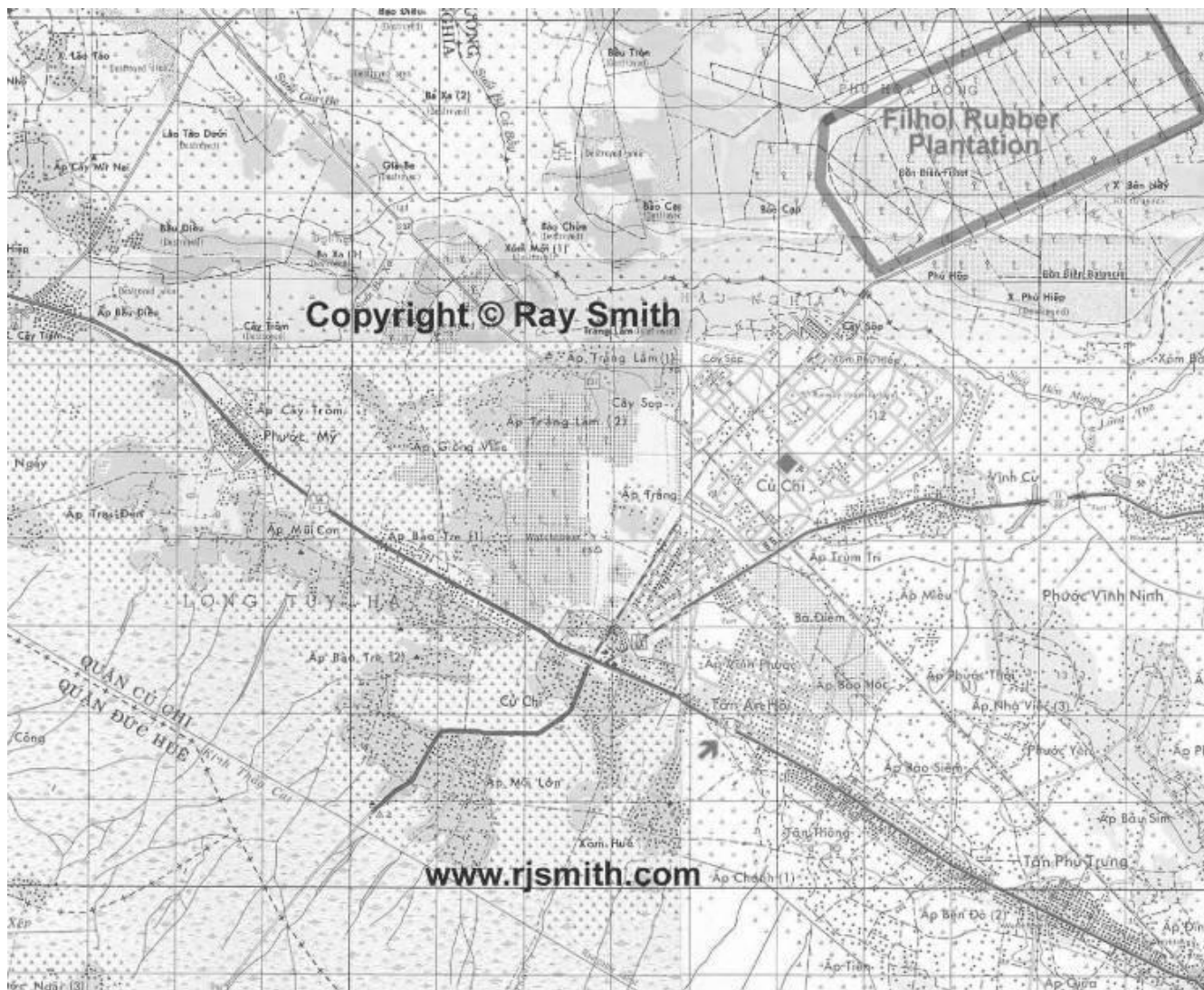
*The only exception I remember was the action at the Cao Dai temple in Sep 68; Butch (Sincock) can tell you about that. I deeply regret the KIA and WIA that occurred in those battles. I am sure that had not "Butch" (his nickname but I never called him that!) W been so adamant about sparing infantry blood, a lot of you guys who are on this board and were in 25 ID during his command would not be here now.*

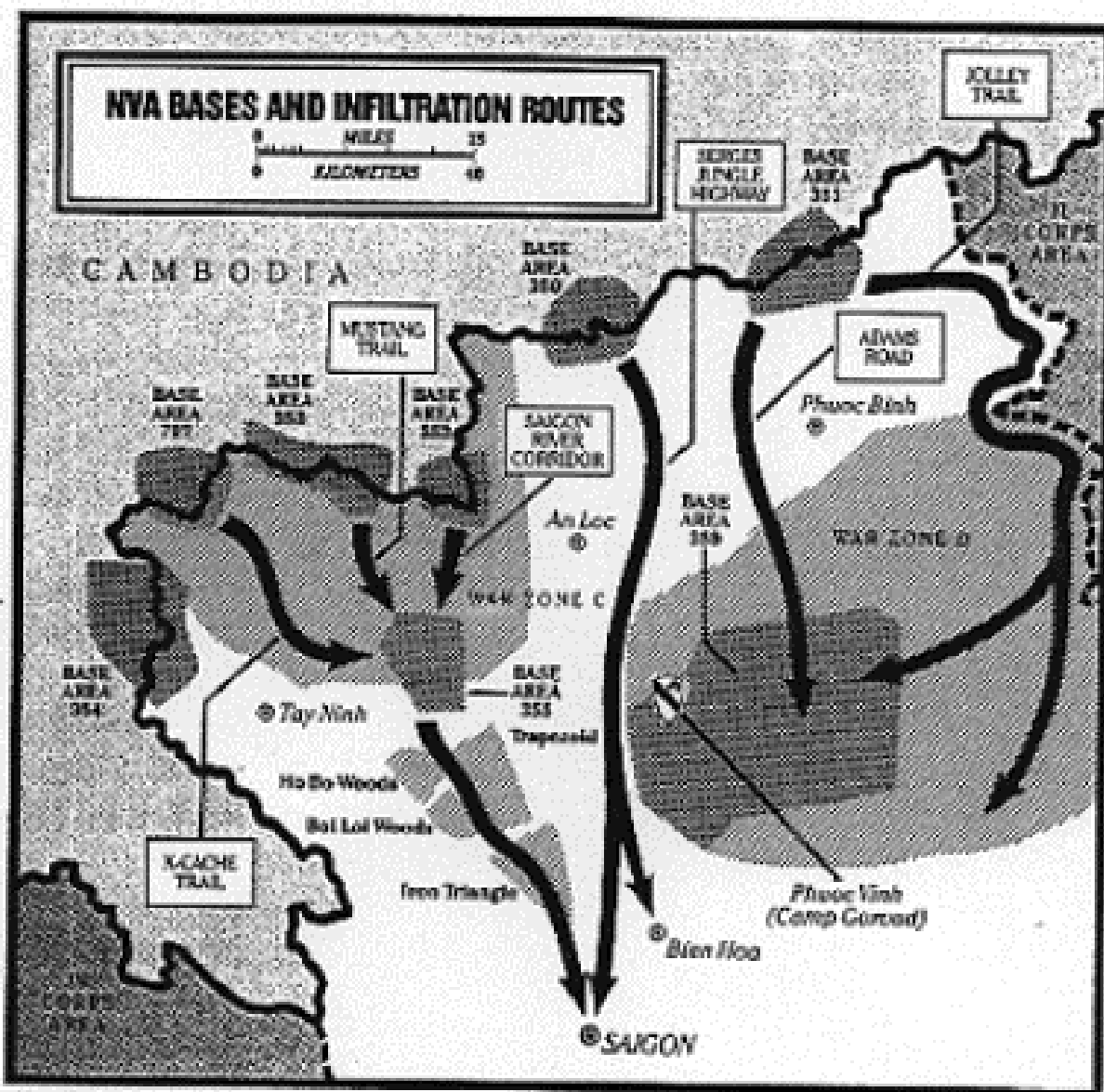
*Rest in peace, Lighting 6.*

*Mohawk 6*

*Ed note: MJ Williamson served first distinguished tour of duty in Vietnam as Commander, 173 Inf Bde (Abn) in 1965.*

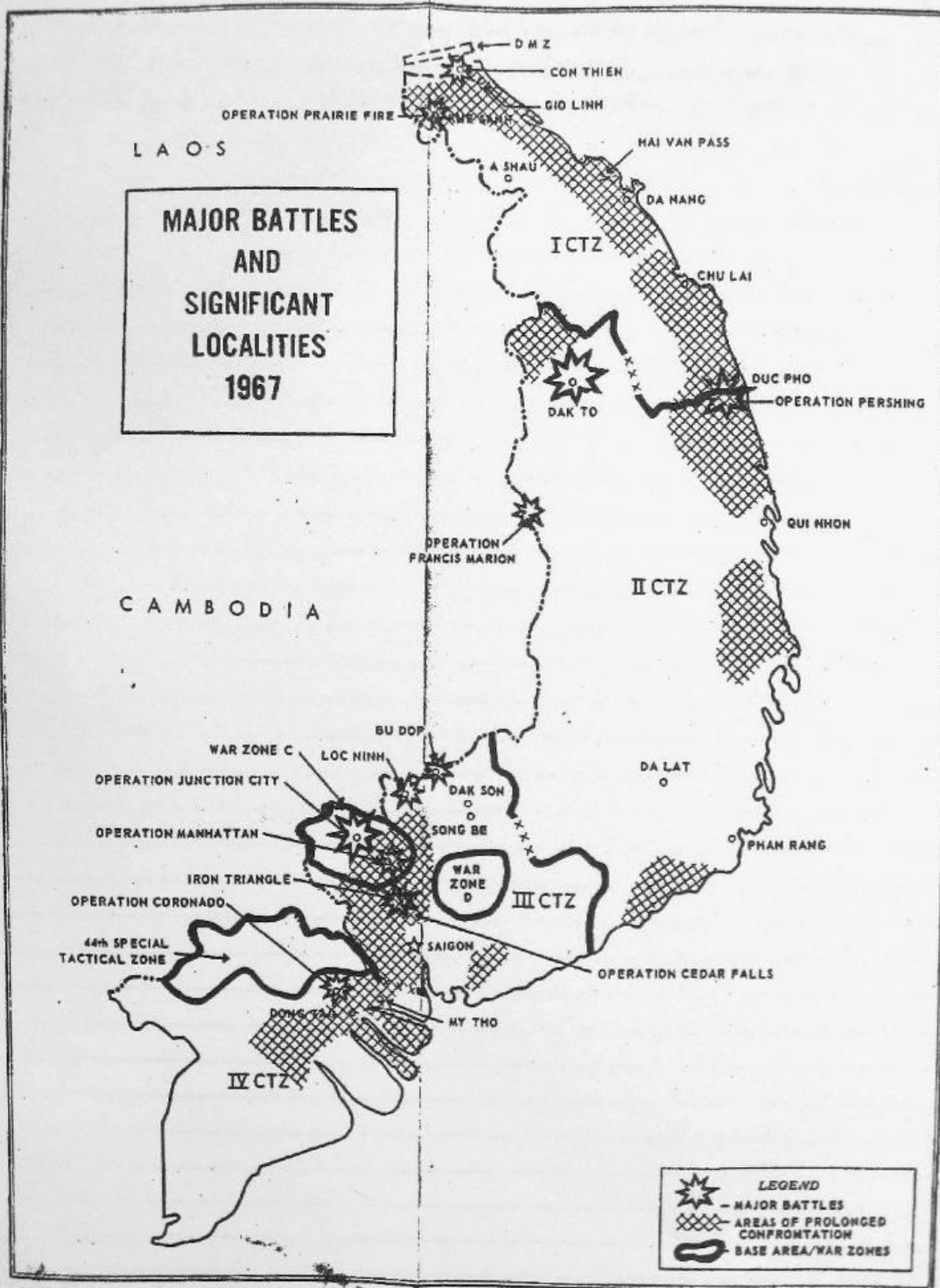






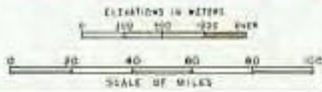
Major communist base areas in III Corps in operation when the 1st Air Cavalry Division was deployed to the region in November 1968. The infiltration routes were discovered sequentially. The Cav initially targeted the Saigon River Corridor and the Serpes Jungle Highway. The Mustang Trail was discovered in early 1969, as was the X-Cache Trail. Later in 1969, the Adams Road was interdicted, but the Jolley Trail was not discovered until December 1969.





# SOUTH VIETNAM

The Tet Offensive  
29 January – 25 February 1968



THAILAND

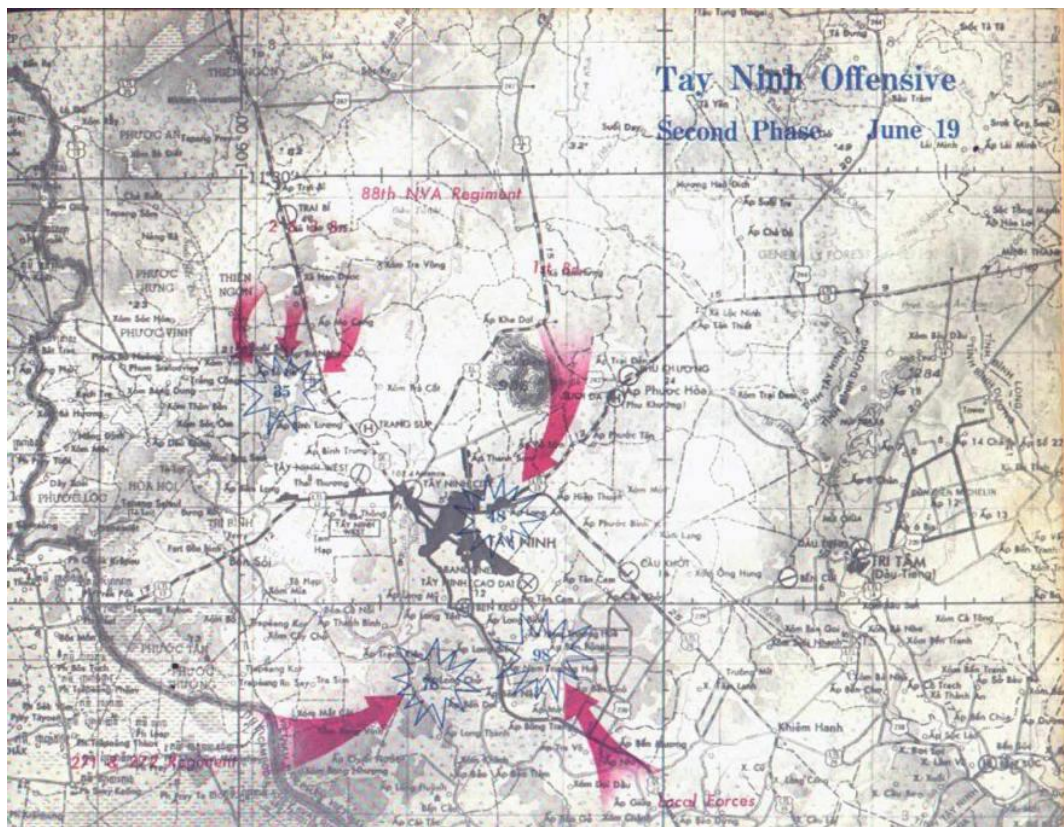
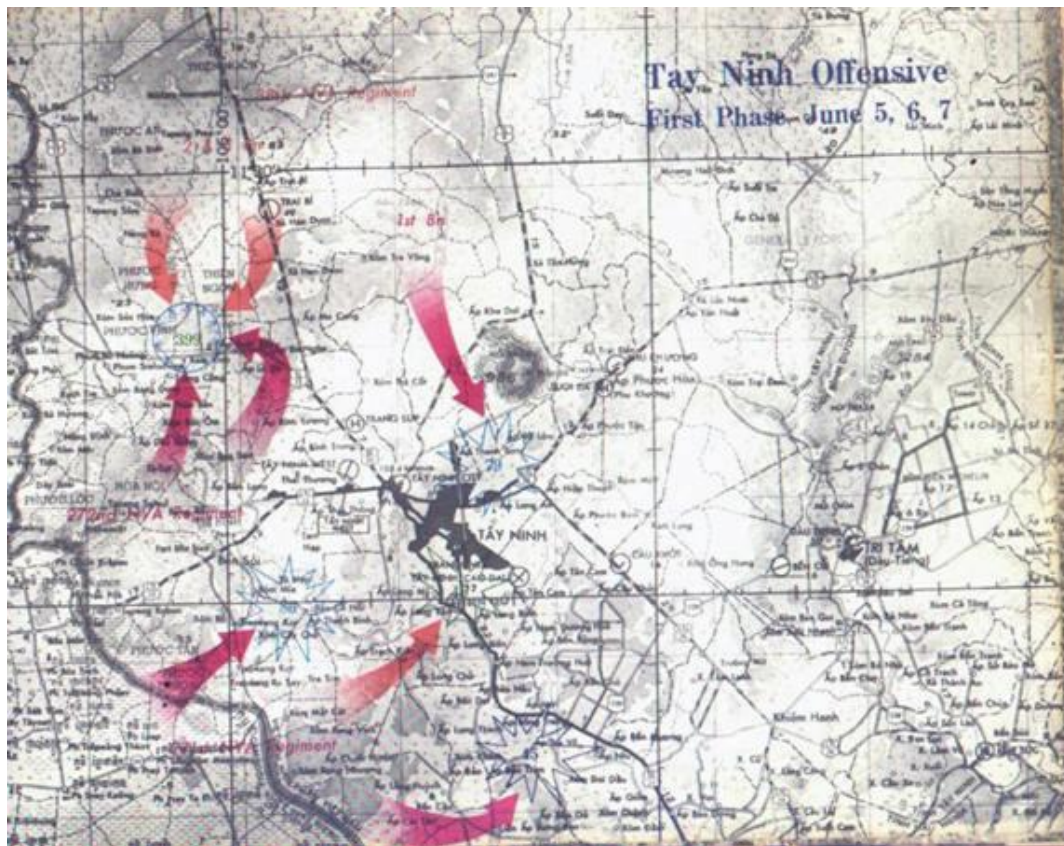
C A M B O D I A

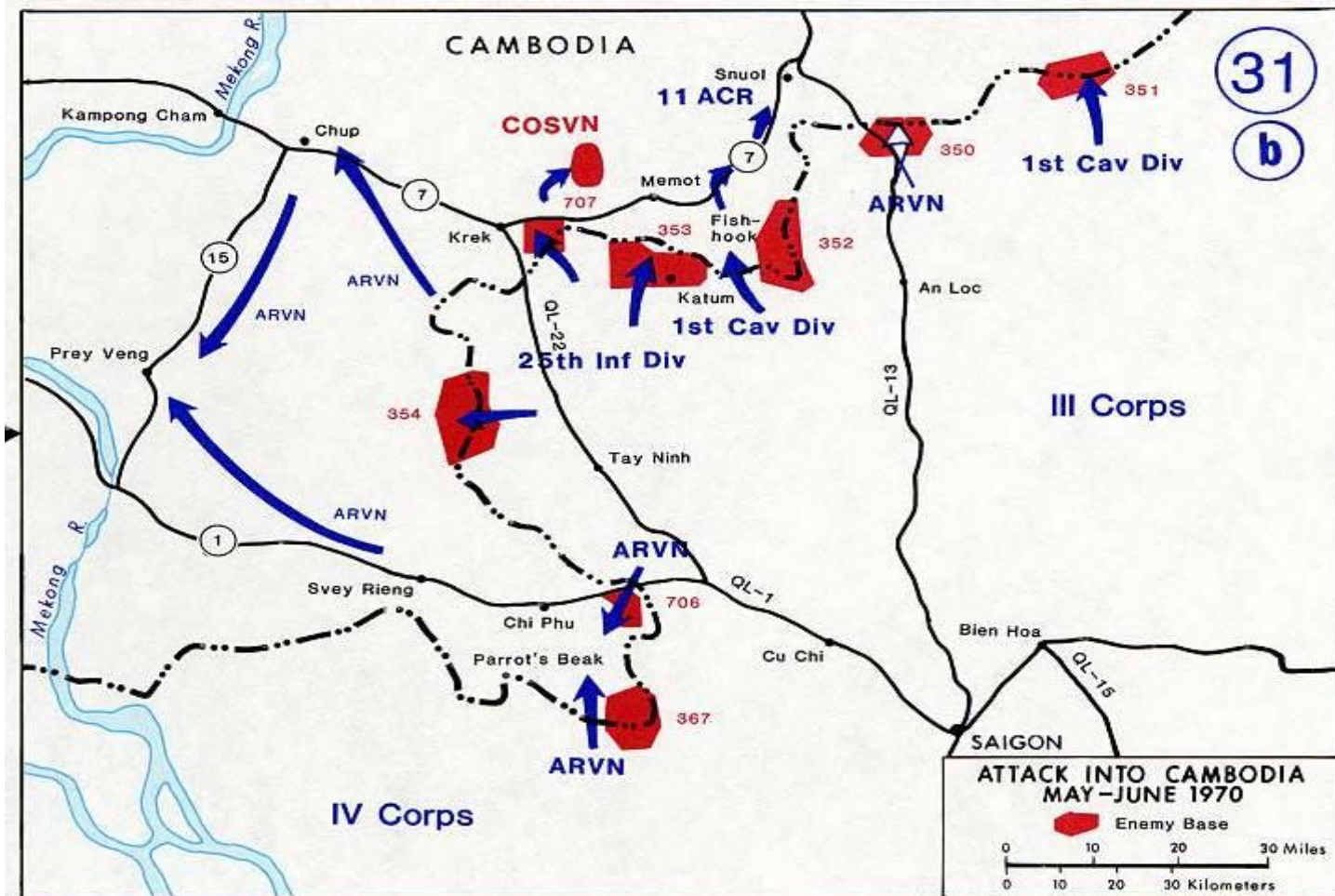
### LEGEND

- Major NVA and VC attacks, September 1967 to mid January 1968
- Locations of major communist attacks 30 January and shortly afterwards

Gulf of Piam

Generally, allied units were dispersed in the western reaches of South Vietnam in an effort to meet NVA and VC attacks during the months just preceding the Tet offensive.





**Base Areas and US Advances**