



WELCOME TO "A WALK WITH THE 35TH"



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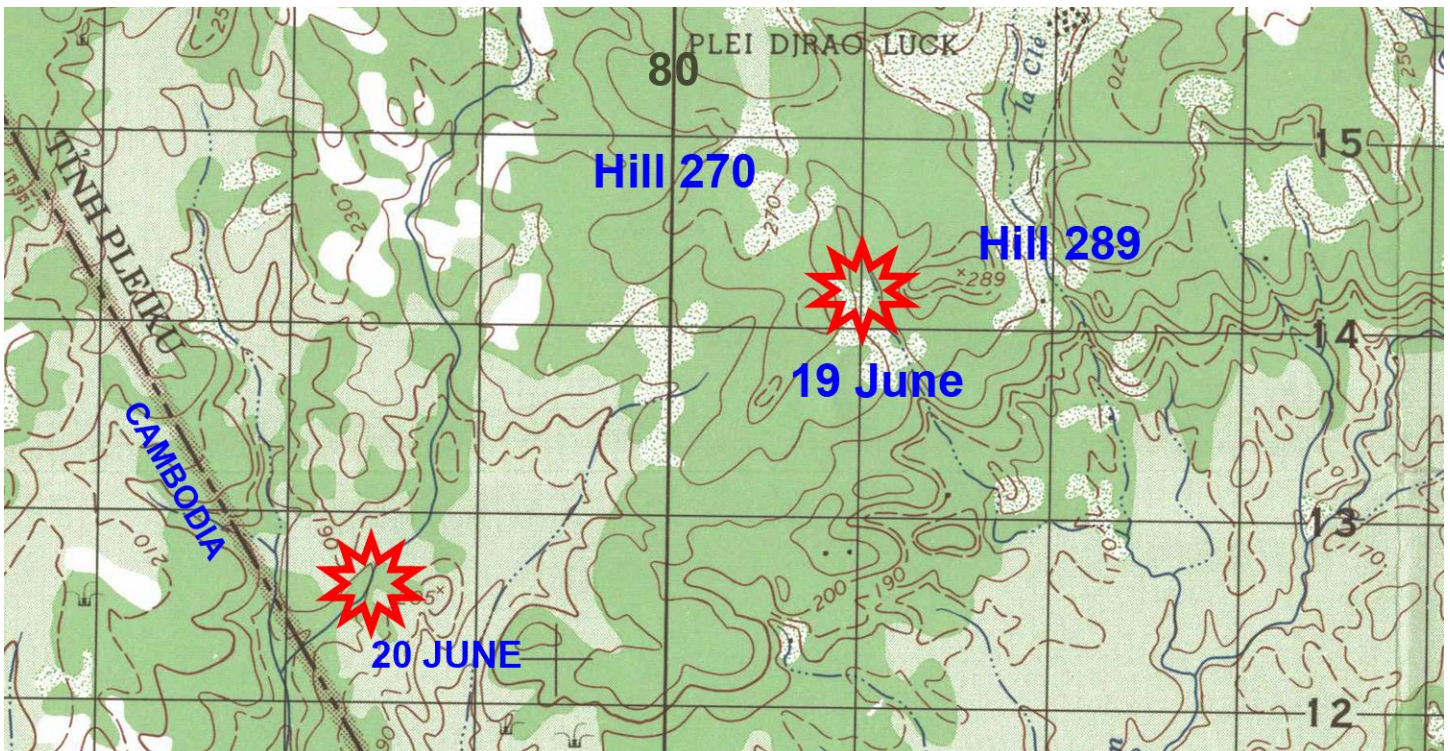
19 June – A Medal of Honor

The 2d Battalion 35th Infantry's involvement with Operation Paul Revere I was attempting to interdict NVA entering Vietnam from Cambodia. To adequately cover this large AO, A Company's commander decided to split his company into two parts leaving Lt. Ron Ray with his platoon, plus a mortar squad, to cover the northern portion of their AO.

Lt. Ray was thus faced with a dilemma that plagued platoon leaders in Vietnam; how to protect his men in such an AO with a unit too large to hide in such an area but too small to defend itself against a large force.

His solution was two-fold. Reconnoitering the AO, Lt. Ray determined three likely enemy avenues of approach and set-up LPs to monitor them. He also located a knoll, steep with clear terrain on three sides, and used that as a base of operations. From this Base a patrol walked the AO each morning and checked the various LPs'. Lt. Ray normally accompanied this patrol.

A few days prior to June 19, such a patrol discovered a fresh-cut trail near Hill 270, which was one of the areas earlier highlighted as being a likely avenue of approach for the NVA. Hill 270 was at approximately YA 805147 and within three kilometers of Cambodia. The trail was followed and a small NVA patrol was surprised, resulting in one enemy killed and another captured. Both NVA had fresh haircuts, were well fed, and well-armed. Coupled with earlier indications of enemy activity, Lt. Ray came to the conclusion that a large NVA movement could be anticipated in the area around Hill 270. The prisoner was sent to the rear and the CO was informed of the lieutenant's suspicions.



On the morning of June 19, a patrol was instructed to recon near the Cambodian border and then to link-up with the most northern LP. That LP was established near a stream that crossed a main trail near Hill 270. The link-up was successfully made resulting in approximately ten men at the site. Around early afternoon the LP detected movement in the area. Lt. Ray reported this development to the CO and instructed the LP to be prepared to pull back to base.



Almost immediately the LP came under intense small arms fire. Lt. Ray instructed the LP to blow all claymores, disengage, move back toward the base, and he would head in their direction. Convinced that a major enemy unit was present, Lt. Ray updated the CO. and asked for additional manpower. He was told that there was no other unit close enough to reinforce in any reasonable time frame and also that consensus was this was a minor probe and

not major enemy movement.

The LP then reported receiving withering fire from all sides with the RTO badly wounded. Lt. Ray instructed them to stay put and he would come to them. Due to the need to move fast, Lt. Ray decided to leave the Mortar squad at the base under SSG William H. Byrd Jr. Forming the remainder of his men under Squad leaders SSG David A. Bynum and Sgt. John C. Birdine Jr., Lt. Ray moved toward the embattled LP. This decision was driven both by the certain precariousness of the LP's situation and the fact that there were only a few hours of daylight left.

Due to the previous patrols, the area was fairly well known to Lt. Ray. He reasoned they could take the main trail directly to Hill 275, then west to the contact point; or take a straight-line approach which was shorter (about 2 Km) but would necessitate his men breaking bush the whole way and thus might actually take longer. Reasoning that the enemy would be expecting reinforcement along the main trail, Lt. Ray opted to go through the heavy terrain.

The men of this rescue team, realizing time was of the essence, sacrificed their bodies while rapidly breaking a human trail toward the beleaguered LP. Upon nearing the surrounded men, Lt. Ray led the way up the slope and told his men to use grenades and numerous small arms bursts in hopes of deceiving the NVA into thinking they were a large force. The ruse was successful as the enemy pulled back from the area of penetration and the rescue patrol was able to close with the LP. A quick assessment by Lt. Ray found the LP intact, with only the RTO hit with a severe head wound.

Shortly thereafter the NVA regrouped and directed heavy fire at the group from two different locations. Lt. Ray directed a squad to envelop and silence one of the enemy positions, but they were quickly pinned down near that position. Fearing their annihilation, Lt. Ray moved on the enemy position and silenced it using his shotgun and hand grenades. Aware of an opening up hill from which no fire was being received, Lt. Ray then instructed the Medic to prepare the RTO for evacuation and called for a Medevac. As the Medic plus two men moved toward the anticipated LZ, they became pinned down by heavy fire. Lt. Ray then realized the NVA were moving to surround his force but still thought they were unaware of the exact size of that force.

Another squad maneuver was attempted to rescue the Medic and RTO, but they too came under heavy fire and were unable to move. In an attempt to cover the withdrawal of the Medic and RTO, Lt. Ray moved past them, again using grenades and his shotgun to silence the NVA while killing several.

An enemy grenade was then thrown into the Medic's and RTO's position. Lt. Ray shouted a warning to them, but not seeing a reaction he dove over them and shielded them from the blast—taking considerable shrapnel. Turning toward the enemy position from where the grenade had been launched, Lt. Ray was then hit in both legs by small arms fire but managed, with his last grenade, to also silence this enemy position.

His wounds had now paralyzed his lower body and the Medic managed to help Lt. Ray back to the perimeter. Aware of a lull in the fighting, Lt. Ray ordered SSG Bynum to prepare a withdrawal in the direction from where the rescue patrol had come; reasoning that the enemy may not have yet reinforced that sector. Lt. Ray offered to stay behind and cover the withdrawal if needed. At that point Sgt. Burdine stepped forward and volunteered to carry Lt. Ray, those two being the last to leave. The Americans met only minor resistance going back down the slope and eventually reached a suitable LZ about two clicks to the northeast; Sgt. Burdine carried Lt. Ray the entire journey.

Lt. Ray and the RTO, PFC Vincent Moeller, were both evacuated a short time later with Pfc. Moeller dying during the Medevac. Lt. Ray was initially operated on at Pleiku and later was sent back to Womack Army Hospital at Ft. Bragg for further treatment. (Dick Arnold, A/1/35)