

1969 News May

IVY LEAF

4 May 1969

### ***Cacti Blue Takes A Break***

OASIS — Company barbecues and a visit from movie starlets, highlighted a stand-down for the 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry at the Oasis.

A carnival atmosphere prevailed throughout the three days of the Cacti Blue stand-down. Each company had a barbecue, the most popular feature of which was charcoal broiled steaks.

"The best part of all, though," according to Specialist 4 James Pickerill, of Lyons, Kan., a member of the Delta Company Mortar Platoon, "was the chance to forget war for a few days. No patrols, no guard duty. We just acted like it was peace time."

Although the primary purpose of the stand-down was to provide the Cacti Blue with a well-earned break after ten months in the field, the days also afforded an opportunity to solve numerous administrative difficulties.

The Division Composite Personnel Team handled finance and personnel records problems. Problems with equipment were taken to Maintenance Contact Teams. To the chagrin of some, all shot records were brought up to date.

A mobile PX visited the battalion area and was immediately busy selling cameras, film, radios, and tape recorders.

The new cameras and film were put to immediate use when the battalion was visited by Sharon Hillyer, Suzann Brent, and Sharon Mullikin, three very beautiful and friendly girls with a touring USO show.

Other activities crowded the calendar for the three days the Cacti Blue spent at the Oasis. Volleyball and football were popular but writing letters home filled most of the time. Many took full advantage of the privilege to sleep at any time of the day or night.

At the conclusion of the stand-down, the Cacti Blue executive officer, Major Dennis M. Duggan of Honolulu, pronounced the operation a success.

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### ***Cacti Blue Awarded Unit Citation Honors***

OASIS — Becoming a tradition in the Army is not an easy thing to do. But, in the opinion of Major General Donn R. Pepke, commander of the Famous Fighting Fourth Division, the 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry is well on its way toward that coveted reputation.

The Cacti Blue forces were hailed by General Pepke and the battalion was awarded a Meritorious Unit Citation in ceremonies at the Oasis, home of the 3rd Brigade.

"The Cacti Blue is almost tradition in the Army. They have done great things for a number of years, and especially during the Vietnam campaign," said General Pepke after placing a battle streamer on the battalion colors.

The battalion was cited for actions during the period November 1, 1967 through April 30, 1968. During this time, the Cacti Blue was under the control of six different brigades in the coastal areas of Vietnam's II Corps area.

The unit was involved in numerous operations during this period and moved on eight occasions covering an area of approximately 600 miles.

The 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry accounted for 716 enemy deaths. In addition, the battalion conducted activities with four allied elements ranging from Popular Forces platoons to the Republic of Vietnam's Regular Army elements.

The victories resulting from these endeavors greatly stimulated self confidence, morale and esprit' de corps in the Vietnamese units. While establishing an outstanding combat reputation, the battalion materially contributed to the Free World effort in the Republic of Vietnam.

General Pepke also had words of praise for the Cacti Blue efforts in the recent Chu Prong Mountain fighting. The division commander outlined the battalion's achievements under the leadership of Lieutenant Colonels James Moore, Joseph S. Sulenski and James E. Price, the present commander.

"In the Chu Prong area your exploits again were outstanding. You killed many NVA troops, destroyed over 150 fortifications and the caches you discovered were sorely missed by the enemy," added General Pepke.

"All I can say is, I salute you and your leaders for your outstanding accomplishments in the past few months. Needless to say, I know that you will continue to write even a greater history in the coming months."

Photo caption: Well-Earned – Staff Sergeant Dale F. Depoy of South Bend, Ind., looks with justified pride at the newest streamer earned by the Cacti Blue. (Photo by 1Lt Jim Hughes)

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### ***Charlie Loses Rice To Cacti Blue Hunt***

**By SP4 Michael Tousey**

OASIS—In a two day search of a stream bed near the battalion firebase, Cacti Blue, Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry, uncovered five tons of Viet Cong rice and captured one North Vietnamese submachine gun.

A Viet Cong suspect, detained by the Cacti Blue the previous day, led the Bravo Company troops to the first of four caches found in the area.

"The detainee said there was only one cache along the blue line," said 1st Lieutenant William R. Burdick of East Lyme, Conn., Bravo Company Commander, "but we were skeptical and probed out to the east about 50 meters where Specialist 4 Leonard Peak of Havre, Mont., found another cache of approximately one ton of rice.

"Close to this location Private First Class Robert Hill of Plainfield, Ill., found a North Vietnamese submachine gun with a loaded magazine and a round in the chamber. It was in perfect condition."

The search was discontinued for the day and a small element was left near the two caches. An enemy force, estimated at between a squad and a platoon, attempted to reach the rice, but was driven off by grenades and artillery fire.

The search was continued downstream the following morning, where two more caches were found with a total of about three tons of rice.

"All four caches were constructed the same," said Sergeant Robert A. Toledo of New York City. "They built a hooch just like the Montagnards use to store rice. Then they dug out the stream bank and lowered the hooch into the hole.

"This kept the rice off the ground in the hole. They even placed rat traps around the area to protect the rice.

"They put a log roof over the hole and camouflaged it with straw and leaves, leaving an entrance through the bank facing the stream. You could only see the cache from the stream bed."

During the search, Bravo Company also found caches from which the rice had already been removed. These structures were also destroyed.

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### ***Cacti Blue's Alpha Company Ransacks VC Supply Depots***

**By SP4 Michael Tousey**

OASIS — Alpha Company, 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry played finders-keepers with the enemy for four days, with the Cacti Blue coming out as the easy winners in the Chu Kehn Mountains.

The mountains, forty miles south of Pleiku, yielded three M1 carbines, two submachine guns, two light machine guns and a 30.06 Springfield rifle in the first cache discovery.

Also found in the area were 2,500 .30 caliber rounds, a CHICOM grenade, an anti-tank mine and medical supplies.

Working with the 7th Squadron, 17th Cavalry, Alpha Company was making a late afternoon sweep of the wild area when the second cache was found.

This cache included six B40 rockets, 26 60mm mortar rounds, a 60mm mortar tube, six B40 booster charges, three cans of 60mm mortar charges and one can of 60mm mortar fuses.

### Chief's Quarters

"A Viet Cong (VC) district chief's headquarters had been reported in the area," said Alpha Company Commander Captain Walter L. Corey of Concord N.H., "so we were not surprised when we found a base camp area.

"There was a barracks area, dispensary, club, and kitchen with 35 to 40 chickens and eight pigs running around.

"They must have left in a big hurry when the gunships hit as they still had equipment, like pistol belts, hanging there, and we found packs, with clothing and medicine hidden in the rocks.

"The area had been used a long time," continued Captain Corey. "The hooches and kitchen equipment had been there approximately twelve months. It looked like they had been keeping their families there, too."

"I spotted a hooch after we left their base area," said Private First Class George Barnes of Marion, Ill., describing the finding of the first cache.

"I went up to it and the weapons were sticking out from under a poncho. It looked like they just left them there and ran. The 30.06 still had five rounds in it."

PFC Barnes found the second cache when Alpha Company returned to the area the following morning to make a more thorough search. The cache was hidden in a crevice in the rocks 100 meters up the mountainside from the VC base camp.

An old rag placed on one of the rocks caught PFC Barnes' attention, and a careful investigation discovered the mortar and rocket cache.

### Another One

"Another day another cache," seemed to be the slogan of the Cacti Blue, as they discovered still another one the next day.

The cache included 11 grenades, 19 60mm mortar rounds, one claymore mine, one box of carbine ammunition, four boxes of C4 and sixty AK-47 rounds.

And the day after that Alpha Company found what appeared to be a main dispensary for the VC district headquarters complex.

"The supplies were hidden over a wide area with almost the whole company helping in the search," said Sergeant Spencer Kreiser of Lorain, Ohio. "It was hidden in tree trunks, under rocks, up trees; it was just like an Easter egg hunt."

Private First Class Peter Horton of Wilton, Calif., a medic with Alpha Company, described the captured medical supplies.

"They had almost everything an aid station would need. There was even quinine and vitamins, which, according to the label, were made in Hanoi."

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*Note: The Ivy Leaf Changed to "Steadfast and Loyal" with this issue*

### *Allies Welcome Enemy Soldier*

By SP4 John Rowe



**OASIS** — Tired and thirsty, the North Vietnamese Army soldier clutched the Chieu Hoi leaflet in his hands as he sought to find an Allied unit.

Almost simultaneously, Bravo Company of the 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry was moving into a night location in an area 57 miles south of Pleiku.

As the Famous Fighting Fourth Division company was chopping down some trees to better fortify its position, the enemy soldier, clad in green fatigues and carrying an AK47 rifle and rucksack, approached Bravo Company's perimeter.

For Bravo Company commander 1st Lieutenant William Burdick of East Lyme, Conn., the situation was tense. He would have to decide whether the enemy soldier, now waving a branch, was sincere or not.

Lieutenant Burdick then took the precautionary measure of placing his men in firing positions.

However, Lieutenant Burdick's suspicions were relieved as the enemy soldier dropped his rifle and continued walking toward the position. The Cacti Blue commander then motioned for the NVA to continue inside the perimeter.

*"At first I thought he was a decoy for a larger element and that he was trying to lure us into an ambush."*

**DISENCHANTED AND OPPRESSED** by the war effort, the NVA soldier's face reflected the hardships of futile combat.

"I think he was just tired of the war and the fighting," said Staff Sergeant Ayala Eleizer of New Brunswick, N.J.

Once inside the perimeter, the NVA soldier was given a canteen of water and a cigarette by the 3rd Brigade unit.



His expression began to change as he sipped the water and reread the Chieu Hoi leaflet. His uneasiness wore off and, he was confident that he had made the right decision.

After days of wandering through the rugged terrain of the Central Highlands, the NVA soldier had satisfied his desire to Chieu Hoi to the Government of South Vietnam.



*The NVA Soldier's face reflected the hardships of futile combat*

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### ***Cacti Green Hunts Bases***

**OASIS — In the largest combat assault (CA) of the year, the Famous Fighting Fourth's 1st Battalion, 35th Infantry flew 500 men and support equipment 12 miles south of The Oasis for an operation that has led to the discovery of enemy caches and huts.**

**Four companies and a command element were lifted by 15 Hueys and five Chinooks from the fixed-wing air field at the Oasis.**

**The airlift was completed within an hour; the command element was situated at Plei Mei and each company was assigned an area of operation to search for enemy caches as they worked their way back to their firebase.**

**During the first day of operations Bravo Company found and destroyed two well camouflaged huts, each capable of sleeping nine men.**

**"The only consistently effective method of finding well hidden hootches," stated 1st Lieutenant John Kelly, the 3rd Platoon leader, "is to search the thickest vegetation and keep away from used trails."**

**On the second day of the operation, Bravo Company found two rice caches. Over 6,700 pounds of rice were in holes that had been concealed by two feet of overhead camouflage.**

**During the entire operation, companies reported a large number of the enemy's anti-personnel devices (booby traps) which had decayed or were no longer functioning. One such booby trap consisted of a whip like piece of bamboo which, when functioning, projected an arrow along a well worn path.**

**In order to find hidden enemy supplies, the fighting Gypsies probed swamps with bamboo poles and searched stream banks for tunnels and caves.**

**Once the operation is complete, the enemy will be minus a necessity, food, and a luxury, for Charlie, sleeping huts.**