

1969 News June

IVY LEAF

1 June 1969

Specialist Shaw Stops Enemy Sapper Attack

OASIS—The dog nearby continued to bark excitedly so Specialist 4 John T. Shaw thought it was time to find out what was happening on the northern perimeter of the Oasis.

The headquarters of the 3rd Brigade had sustained an enemy attack three nights earlier, so Specialist Shaw's senses were finely keyed.

"The area had been well illuminated in the past hour, but I thought I had better set off a hand flare to see what was going on," said the Dallas, Tex., native.

Suddenly light from a trip flare attached to the barbed wire at the inner most edge of the perimeter cut through the pitch black night.

"When the trip flare went off I was able to see an NVA soldier crawling through a hole he had cut in the wire. Right behind him were four others.

I immediately opened fire with my M79 grenade launcher. I fired three rounds, with the third round hitting right in the middle of the men lying on the ground.

By the time I fired the third round I could see them all plainly. I'm almost sure I got one of them," said Specialist Shaw, a member of Echo Company, 1st Battalion, 35th Infantry.

As bunkers along the perimeter opened fire, the enemy sappers retreated from the area.

A search of the perimeter uncovered a B40 rocket booster, 10 satchel charges, two grenades and a Bangalore torpedo that the sappers had left behind.

The enemy intruders, wearing black shorts, straw hats and carrying AK47 rifles, had disarmed the trip flares in the outer strands of barbed wire by tying strips of bamboo around them.

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1 June 1969

Boosts 'Yard Morale; Plei Do Villagers Repel VC

By SGT Michael Tousey

CAMP ENARI — The People's Self Defense Force of Plei Do repelled an attack by an estimated platoon size force of Viet Cong (VC) in an hour long firefight at the perimeter of their village.

A sweep of the area by the Montagnard villagers the following morning turned up two blood stained shirts.

The enemy attacked the southeast corner of the village which faces a VC infiltration route into Pleiku. In addition to the Self Defense Force, artillery and gunships participated in the fight. The Viet Cong have regularly probed the village from the east, but had never attacked it before.

"I was really pleased that the Self Defense Force reacted so well their first time under fire," said 1st Lieutenant William A. Ruzin of Hopkins, Minn., the Civil Affairs team leader from the 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry.

"Before we knew it they were in the trenches firing away at the enemy. None of the VC came near penetrating the perimeter.

"This contact has had a very positive effect on the morale of the Self Defense Force and the village. They know now that the village can defend itself."

The Cacti Blue Civil Affairs Team has been helping the villagers in Plei Do fortify the village and construct needed improvements.

The men from the 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry who are sent out to Plei Do nightly for added security were not needed in defeating the attacking enemy force.

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8 June 1969

Cacti Blue Training Helps Green Soldier

By SGT Michael Tousey

BAN BLECH — Specialist 4 Kevin Ryder of Hamden, Conn., had never been in combat before. In fact, he had just arrived in-country. But his inexperience wasn't important to Staff Sergeant Dale F. Depoy of Winamac, Ind., a platoon sergeant with Delta Company, 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry.

"Today, you're walking point for the Company," Sergeant Depoy instructed Specialist Ryder. "Keep your eyes open for the enemy; they could be any place waiting in ambush. Keep your weapon ready until you see the first NVA, then start firing."

As the platoon sergeant gave the order to move out, Specialist. Ryder began leading his men through the jungle lanes of the practice course at the battalion firebase, Landing Zone (LZ) Thirsty.

The new men of the Cacti Blue walk the jungle path followed by experienced soldiers acting as scorers who keep records of each man's hits and misses. Along the trails and in trees and brush are hidden silhouettes, some of which can pop up in a simulated ambush when the scorer pulls a concealed string.

While it's only practice, each man who walks through the jungle-land course gets a first taste of what his next year could bring.

"The men ' know their lives may depend upon this extra training," said Sergeant Depoy, "and they give their fullest attention to the instruction."

Colonel Price, our battalion commander, believes in training even in a combat zone like Vietnam," explained the Delta Company commander, Captain Philip R. Fogle, of South Bend, Ind., while discussing the Cacti Blue combat training program .organized under the supervision of Sergeant Depoy.

"When a company rotated to the battalion forward firebase, as ours is now, there is a perfect opportunity for training of this sort.

"Before walking the jungle lane each man is taken to the firing range where he can confirm his zero and work on general marksmanship," Captain Fogle continued. "We also have instruction in areas; such as map reading and adjusting artillery. Right now we are preparing an M79 Range."

The training has been enthusiastically received by the men of the battalion. It conditions their reflexes and gives them a better idea of what to expect when they do encounter NVA. Practice makes perfect!

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13 June 1969

Red Base Stormed By Cacti

By Sgt Michael Tousey

Highlander Heights – The Reconnaissance Platoon of the 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry, with the support of Alpha and Charlie Companies, airstrikes, gunships, and artillery, routed an estimated North Vietnamese Army (NVA) company from a bunker complex ten miles south of Kontum City, killing five of the enemy.

Charlie Company was credited with killing an additional two NVA in the action.

A search of the bunkers, a battalion size complex containing 77 bunkers and three kitchen areas, the following day yielded four rucksacks containing personal equipment, seventeen 60mm mortar rounds, 250 AK47 rounds, two CHICOM grenades, one rifle grenade and food supplies, all abandoned by the fleeing NVA. Charlie Company also recovered two NVA packs the evening of the contact.

While searching for a weapons platoon which had mortared them the night before, Alpha Company made contact with the enemy. The Recon Platoon quickly moved in and engaged them too.

"We moved up the trail until I saw an NVA," said Sergeant First Class James Tibbit of Leesville, La. "The enemy was firing on us from as close as ten meters, but machine gun fire by Private First Class Johnnie Basey from Jamaica in the West Indies allowed Specialist Grinde (Specialist David Grinde of La Mesa, Calif.) and me to get to cover."

"Then they started firing 60mm mortars, but we did not break contact with the enemy so they were unable to hit us. They were afraid to bring them in too close to their own people. They followed the 60mm with 82mm mortars from the Montagnard village beyond the bunkers."

Artillery and gunships silenced the enemy mortars while the Recon Platoon employed M79s, and LAWs, against the bunker complex. Recon and Alpha Company then withdrew so the Recon Platoon leader, 1st Lieutenant Paul McGunnigle of LaVerne, Calif., could direct artillery and airstrikes against the enemy.

As it began to get dark Recon and Alpha continued to engage the enemy on one side of the village, while Charlie Company moved up in an attempt to seal off the other side from escape.

"Just as we were coming up on the village," said Private First Class Carl A. Bryant of Aurora, Ind., "we saw six NVA going down a trail approximately 75 meters away. We opened up and they took off down a trail an armored personnel carrier had made through the brush."

Two bullet riddled packs were recovered by Charlie Company.

The following morning the village was searched and the location from which the 82mm mortar had been fired was found. Alpha and Charlie Companies and Recon Platoon then swept the bunker complex finding the abandoned enemy equipment and ammunition.

"I think this is the battalion headquarters we've been looking for," said Captain Guy R. Marbury of Connellville, Pa. "It looks like it has been used for several months – until we chased them out yesterday."

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15 June 1969

Cacti Blue LZ Attacked; 18 Enemy Killed

By SGT Michael Tousey

HIGHLANDER HEIGHTS — Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry repelled a night attack killing eighteen enemy attackers ten miles south west of Kontum City near Landing Zone (LZ) Penny.

At 1:50 in the morning, an American reconnaissance team saw three individuals approaching the company perimeter. They waited until the three enemy soldiers were within eight feet and then opened up with their M16s killing all three.

These three NVA soldiers, however, turned out to be only a probe for the main attack which began one hour later when Bravo Company was suddenly hit with incoming.

"They were firing B40s and recoilless rifles from 25 to 30 meters out," said Specialist 4 Vaughan Connors of Cincinnati. "We turned everything we had on, and called in artillery, mortars and "Snoopy' gunships. I guess that was too much for them and they took off."

During the 35 minute fight, Bravo Company received an estimated 75 to 100 incoming rounds, as well as small arms fire.

A sweep outside the perimeter in the morning turned up eighteen enemy bodies, one AK47 rifle with ammunition, seven CHICOM grenades, and one new B41 launcher with five B41 rounds.

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15 June 1969

Recon's Reflexes Are VC Downfall

By PFC Gerald Ducharme

OASIS—The quick, well trained reflexes of an infantry reconnaissance platoon were the downfall of a Viet Cong (VC) squad of eight operating 10 miles west of Camp Enari.

The recon platoon from Echo Company of the Famous Fighting Fourth Division's 1st Battalion, 35th Infantry, discovered eight VC dressed in both green fatigues and black pajamas and equipped with weapons and rucksacks. The enemy squad, emerging from a woodline 100 meters south of the Cacti Green platoon, was traveling southwest along a stream bank.

Without hesitation the recon element reacted before the surprised VC could respond. Small arms fire was employed, resulting in four enemy killed and the detention of one VC suspect.

Captain James Scott of Coleman, Tex., battalion S-3, observed the conflict from a Light Observation Helicopter (LOH) and commented, "It was the alertness of the platoon members that enabled us to engage the enemy squad without taking any injuries."

"Our recon element noticed that the eight enemy suspects were walking into an open area," continued Captain Scott, "and they readied themselves before small arms fire was exchanged."

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23 June 1969

Uncover Enemy's Arsenal

HIGHLANDER HEIGHTS — The Reconnaissance Platoon of the 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry discovered an enemy cache of AK47 rounds and other ammunition while moving to participate in a cordon and search of a village ten miles southwest of Kontum City.

Included in the find were 11,000 rounds of AK47 ammunition, six B41 rockets, 11 B40 rockets, 25 82mm mortar fuses and 16 82mm mortar boosters.

While approaching the village, the platoon discovered a bunker complex. The platoon leader, 1st Lieutenant Paul E. McGunningle of La Verne, Calif., put Private First Class Victor Figueroa of Santurce, P.R., out as an OP while the bunker complex was being searched by the rest of the platoon.

Private First Class Figueroa noticed two unusual looking holes near his position and decided to check them out. Poking in one of them with a pole, he felt some plastic and, called Lieutenant McGunnigle. Except for ten of the B40s, the whole cache was found in these two holes.

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29 June 1969

Sarge Drops Lone Enemy

HIGHLANDER HEIGHTS —Staff Sergeant Eliezer Ayala of New Brunswick, N.J., a platoon sergeant with Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry, was credited with killing one NVA near Landing Zone (LZ) Penny, ten miles south of Kontum City.

Leaving the company perimeter to locate an observation post (OP) for his platoon, Sergeant Ayala spotted the NVA and fired at him. The NVA went down.

The kill was confirmed later in the day by an OP team from Alpha Company, 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry which spotted two NVA carrying a body on a stretcher improvised out of a poncho.

"Collins (Specialist 4 Jack F. Collins of South Barre, Vt.) and I had just gotten into position. Approximately ten minutes later we heard movement," said Private First Class Doug Boughton of Stanley, N.Y. "Then we saw two NVA carrying a third on a stretcher.

"Specialist Collins, who saw them first, opened up and they dropped the stretcher and took off. One of them ran so fast he lost his Ho Chi Minh sandals."

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29 June 1969

It's Only A Bear

HIGHLANDER HEIGHTS – "We were humping up a hill when all the sudden we heard movement," stated Sergeant John Prielipp of Marion, Mich. "We headed for cover thinking it must be a battalion of NVA to make that much noise.

"We were all ready to open up, and then we saw it — a bear came roaring down the hill crashing through the brush. It must have weighed 300 pounds.

"I was so relieved it wasn't the NVA I didn't even think to take a shot at it. And just think what I could have carved on that tree over there: 'JOHN PRIELIPP KILLED A BAR HERE.'" (Note: Mike Tousey relates this was 2/35th but does not remember the Co.)

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29 June 1969

Get Monsoon Relief

OASIS— With the arrival of the monsoons in the Central Highlands, the daily life of an infantry soldier has become a little tougher.

Under a new program instituted by Lieutenant Colonel James Burriss of Chattanooga, Tenn., commander of the 1st Battalion, 35th Infantry, platoons of the Cacti Green's five companies, on a rotating basis, will have from a five to seven day stand down at the Oasis.

The 1st Platoon of Bravo Company was the first element to use the new facility and, naturally, the order of the day was cold beer and soda, hot chow, and a shower. The men also had the opportunity to receive routine medical care and to resolve any personal problems they may have had.

"The stand down that they have set up for us is great. We have a chance to enjoy good food, cold drinks, take a shower and receive clean clothes," said Specialist 4 James Reed of Dallas, Tex. "It gives us a chance to rest before we go back to the field."

Other platoon members voiced the same opinions, adding that the stand down gave them a chance to write and even call their relatives back in the United States through the MARS (Military Affiliated Radio System) facility.

Various sports equipment was also available to the men.

As one member of the platoon said, "At least when it starts raining here, we have a tent to run to. We truly appreciate the stand down."

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Shop Is Easy To Locate

OASIS — If an officer tells a man to get a haircut, he can no longer claim that he can't find the barbershop," smiled Private First Class Robert Palmer Jr., barber for the 1st Battalion, 35th Infantry.

PFC Palmer is referring to the newly painted red and white building which makes the barbershop so easy to find.

PFC Palmer decided to take part in the area beautification program. So he went to work and painted alternate boards red or white. The colorful facade indicates the building's function as well as any barber pole could.