

1969 News July

IVY LEAF

13 July 1969

Recon Pays Off

By SGT Michael Tousey

HIGHLANDER HEIGHTS — Detaining an enemy is a real touchy business," explained Sergeant First Class James Tibbit of Leesville, La., platoon sergeant for the Reconnaissance Platoon of the 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry.

The Recon Platoon, working with Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry, was sweeping an area where there had been contact the previous day. Specialist 4 James Hyatt of Baltimore, a squad leader with Bravo Company, spotted a north Vietnamese Army (NVA) soldier who was suspected as part of a burial party sent back into the area by the enemy.

Specialist Hyatt fired, hitting the enemy in the leg, and the job of apprehending him began.

"You have to find him, get control of the situation and disarm him," said Sergeant Tibbit.

"This requires real care. You want him for the information he has, but he is always dangerous.

"The problem is complicated by the fact that we can't understand each other's languages.

"Yesterday, after Bravo Company shot the NVA, we started searching the area. We knew he was in there. , We moved approximately 300 meters beyond the bunker complex. I thought I heard the guy yelling; we thought he might be trying to get us into an ambush.

"Grinde (Specialist 4 John Grinde of La Mesa, Calif.) and I crossed a Montagnard fence. The NVA jumped up and Grinde fired just above his head, close enough to make him think about the situation.

"He got down fast and we yelled to him to Chieu Hoi. He yelled back something which may have been Chieu Hoi. We moved up on him slowly, got our rifles on him and we had him.

"He did not have any grenades or weapons on him, but checking him out for them was still a problem. He was on his stomach when we got to him and could have had a CHICOM grenade under him, but he didn't."

The Hoi Chanh was turned over to Army of Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) officials who later reported that he gave them a lot of information concerning an ambush on Highway 14.

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Cacti Green Find Snake In the Grass

OASIS—The last thing in the world that the 1st Squad, 3rd Platoon of Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 35th Infantry of the Famous Fighting Fourth Division expected to see on a recent sweep was a 15 foot python.

Sergeant David Reed of Cloquet, Minn., leader of the sweep, spotted the large reptile after some of his squad members had walked by.

"My first reaction was to yell and warn my men about the snake," stated Sergeant Reed. "Then I radioed for permission to kill him."

After receiving permission, Private First Class Rudolph Hoffman of Junction City, Kan., fired one M16 round through the python's head.

Then the Cacti Green soldiers picked up the snake and carried it tug-rope style on their shoulders back to the company's location. That was only the first step on the way to Landing Zone (LZ) Oasis where the snake was to be skinned.

The skin was returned to PFC Hoffman for an unforgettable treasure.

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Cacti Blue Soldiers Crash Enemy Meal

By SGT Michael Tousey

HIGHLANDER HEIGHTS — The point element of Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry interrupted a group of five North Vietnamese (NVA) relaxing at breakfast ten miles southwest of Kontum City and killed one.

The action began when the scout dog working with the point element of Bravo Company alerted the Cacti Blue soldiers, and before the action subsided 21 NVA were dead.

"After the dogs warning we all got down and carefully surveyed the area," said Specialist 4 Charles Tanner of Campbell, Mo., the point man. "We saw a poncho hanging in a tree, and some packs and gear on the ground."

First Lieutenant John Barbeau of Sparta, Ill., and Sergeant Dale Eagle of Newberry, S.C., opened fire killing one. The four other NVA who were eating breakfast fled the area when the firing began.

Then we moved out again with my platoon on line," said Lieutenant Barbeau. "We found several open packs containing 60mm and 82mm mortar rounds; apparently they were trying to get the rounds out of there but did not have the time."

The company began to receive heavy fire again and pulled back to call in additional artillery and air strikes. More than 500 rounds of artillery were poured into the area.

"The enemy mortars were approximately 200 or 300 meters away after we pulled back," said Captain Stanley E. Traeb III of Detroit, Bravo company commander. "It took about 24 seconds from the time the round left the tube for it to reach us, so we moved by counting to 20 after the shot and then hitting the ground.

"As soon as the round went off, we would get up and move for another 20 seconds. There were NVA on our right side, and I would guess they had a forward observer from the way the rounds were coming in."

Bravo Company pulled back to allow room for the artillery, gunships and air strikes to work and prepared to return for a sweep of the area the following day.

The sweep uncovered 21 NVA bodies.

Stan Traeb - Bravo Company 1969

Hello Jim

The action described did occur on 6/10/69.

We actually surprised a Heavy Weapons Company from the 24th NVA regiment as they set up their defensive perimeter for the day and the 5 man group initially engaged was their OP position. The main body was about 25-50 meters further in and they had fighting positions dug behind Bamboo clusters. A prisoner was taken the next day with the assistance of Recon and he identified the unit we had engaged.

We were actually able to overrun their position and occupy it for a short period of time before they cranked up their 82's (3 tubes) and started pounding the daylight out of us. We took about 75 -100 mortar rounds and 36 casualties later, I ordered a withdrawal to a casualty evacuation point some 200 meters or so to our rear and called in TAC Air.

Delta Troop 1/10th Cav was monitoring our push and sent their entire slick section (6 Huey's) to Dust-Off our casualties. Once the casualties were safely away, we were in a position to direct an air strike, but were ordered to fall back to our previous night lager by Big 6 as he indicated that he would spot for the Tac Air.

There were some standout performances that day let me tell you! Lt William Wallin from 2/9th Arty was our FO and what a job he did! He did a little number called "Three Quads, Three Deflections" and we ended up having a 105mm round hit their position about every 5 meters apart in an area of about 150 meters by 150 meters.

Lt John Barbeau performed in his customary Heroic nature while leading the 1st Platoon (which incidentally came out of the field on 6/13/69 with 7 men). Bill Delaney, CP security, took care of an NVA who had decided that he was personally going to take out the entire CP by himself. The heroism that all members of Bravo 2/35 Inf displayed that day had to be seen to be believed. Nothing in this life has ever impressed me as much as what Bravo showed me at LZ Penny between May 8th and June 13th of 1969. We had well over 65% casualties in a 35 day

period and came out of the bush with a 39 man Company. This also included the Weapons Platoon which had been detached from the Firebase and sent out to the bush as replacements.

In all, we had been in 6 Major firefights, had been responsible for over 15,000 of artillery fire, and were officially credited with killing over 120 NVA. The KIA count was a figure determined by S2 as opposed to physical count. Bravo never reported more than what we physically found. We knew we hurt them since the 24th NVA withdrew back to Cambodia while we were still at Penny. However, Bravo had also paid a price. God must have been watching over us then since we only had 1 confirmed KIA from Bravo. A Dog Handler had been critically wounded also but we never got a follow-up report so I pray that he survived.

This article was accurate in every detail except the confirmed NVA body count.

Stan Traeb; Bravo Company 2nd Battalion 35th Infantry; May - Sept 1969

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Cacti Blue Zap Enemy Platoon

By SGT Michael Tousey

HIGHLANDER HEIGHTS—A Bushmaster patrol from Charlie Company, 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry accomplished its purpose before It even moved into position when It engaged an estimated enemy platoon ten miles southwest of Kontum City. Charlie Company was credited with killing four North Vietnamese (NVA) in the contact.

The patrol, led by Sergeant James L. Nightlinger of Bellflower, Calif., was 800 meters from the company patrol base when it received fire from 75 meters away.

"We hit the ground," said Specialist 4 Coy R. Burns of Marietta, Ga., radio telephone operator in Charlie Company, "and Sergeant Nightlinger instructed us to set up a perimeter."

"I moved up to him with the radio, and he called for artillery support. The rest of us put out some real firepower."

The call for support was answered with artillery, gunships, and additional men from Charlie Company. Staff Sergeant Charles Nelson of Alexandria, Va., was joined by Sergeant John F. Nordstrom of Marshalltown, Ia., and his patrol.

"When we met Sergeant Nordstrom's men, we caught an NVA between us; Nordstrom's men opened up on him," said Sergeant Nelson.

"When we got to the contact location," continued Sergeant Nelson, "a gunship came by low and slow. The NVA must have thought it was a dustoff or something, and they fired on it."

"They got a real surprise. We saw where they were firing from and directed the gunship in on them. They stopped taking potshots at gunships real fast."

"We only reported as KIAs the four NVA we hit and saw go down," said Captain Marbury. "Those the gunships or artillery may have gotten were not included."