

Company D, 16th Armor, 173d Airborne Brigade (SEP)

Jun 63 – Sep 68

Tuy Hoa Armor Company, Provisional

Oct 68 – Oct 69

Company D, 16th Armor, 173d Airborne Brigade (SEP)

Organization and Deployment

The 173d Airborne Brigade (SEP) was organized on Okinawa in May 1963, and the foxhole strength of the brigade was formed of the 1-503d INF, 2-503d INF, D/16th ARM, E/17th CAV, and 3-319th FA. Troop D, 16th Cavalry was re-designated under CARS and organized to provide The Brigade with an anti-armor capability. D/16th Armor stands alone as the only airborne separate armor company in the history of the US Army in the Army's only separate airborne brigade. Earliest official references to the unit were *Company D, 16th Armor (Airborne Antitank)*.



Company D, 16th Armor (Airborne Antitank)

The original Table of Organization & Equipment (TO&E) was peculiar to its airborne antitank mission; a HQ and HQ Platoon, a mortar platoon with three 4.2 mortars mounted on M113 Armored Personnel Carriers (APC's), and three maneuver platoons. The three platoons were equipped, in lieu of tanks as in a regular armor company, with the M56 Scorpion Self Propelled Anti Tank (SPAT). The Scorpion SPAT was a tracked vehicle with a high velocity 90mm gun that could be air dropped to fulfill its airborne mission. Each platoon had a heavy section of three M56 Scorpions and two M113 APC's in its light section. By the time the 173d Airborne Brigade (SEP) deployed to Vietnam two years later on 5 May 65, D/16th Armor was organized with one platoon of five SPAT's and two platoons of APC's as the company's maneuver platoons.

Although the company had trained extensively with the Scorpion for two

years prior to deployment throughout the 173d Airborne Brigade's theater of operations in the Pacific, once under combat conditions its shortcomings became very apparent. The M56 was always a maintenance nightmare and became even more so under combat conditions. It was simply too slow and mechanically unreliable under the best conditions, such as convoy security on roads, and even worse on cross country terrain. But more significantly, the Scorpion was not a tank nor an armored fighting vehicle. It was simply a gun system mounted on tracks for all terrain mobility with no armor protection for the crew (driver, track commander, gunner, and loader). The driver did have a plexi-glass windscreen, which broke immediately upon encountering brush and trees. The entire crew was completely exposed to hostile fire. This was not conducive under any circumstances to fight out of, let alone in armor's "shock action" role in combat. The Scorpion was truly useless other than in a static defensive posture.

With the absence of an enemy armor threat and the deficiencies of the M56 as an armored fighting vehicle, they were all removed within months and replaced with M113 APC's for all four line platoons in the company. In mid-1966 the 4.2 mortars were reassigned to 1/503d INF in a dismounted role.

An Armor Company with no Tanks

Until its deactivation, D/16 was organized along the lines of an armor company of the time. Two armored vehicles for HQ command, one M77 Command and Control track, and five armored vehicles per platoon, however, still no tanks. The company in lieu of authorized tanks, supposedly the M551 Sheridan, was still equipped with M113 APC's. On point of fact, the company was not even equipped with the Armored Cavalry Assault Vehicle (ACAV) as of Summer 68. The ACAV was an M113-A1 equipped with gun shield and cupola armor for the Track Commander (TC) and M2 .50 caliber HMG and gun shields for the two side mounted M60 7.62mm LMG. Every other cavalry and mechanized infantry unit in Vietnam had ACAV configured APC's at that time. The M113-A1 was diesel powered and eliminated 'Technicolor funerals' for which older version gas tracks were infamously known.

D/16th Armor's APC's were equipped with gunshields for the TC, but no surrounding cupola armor, fabricated by the company Motor/Maintenance Section. The gun shields were made of 3/8" to 1/2" cold roll steel plate. This was moot at any rate, as the un-tempered cold roll steel was inconsistent in stopping enemy .30 caliber rifle fire, let alone 12.7mm HMG rounds. Each track had at least two machine guns - not standardized like an ACAV but an eclectic mix of M2 HMG's and M60's. Some tracks had three M2's or two M2's or two M2's and one M60, but never less than two M2's per vehicle. Over the years, each time an APC was lost to combat action, the OEM equipped M2 HMG and pintle mount was kept and placed on the replacement vehicle. For D/16th Armor the exigency of combat was the mother of invention. It was also the reason the company failed its Pre Annual Government Inspection (AGI).

Since the company Property Book in the spring of 1968 had no correlation in fact, theory, or practice to an actual armor company, the Executive Officer of the company was directed to submit to Brigade and USARV a TO&E that most reflected D/16th Armor in actuality. What was submitted and formed was an armor company TO&E with the M113-A1 ACAV in lieu of the authorized M551 Sheridan Tank, an air

droppable tank that had yet to be issued to armor units in Vietnam, that would have fulfilled D/16th Armor's original airborne antitank mission. This revised TO&E was implemented in the fall of 1968, and by the time D/16th Armor melded with E/17th Cavalry a year later, all were M113-A1 ACAV configured.

Operations May 1965 to Summer 1968

As an original component and organic unit of the Brigade, D/16th Armor with E/17th Cavalry were the first US Army armor units in Vietnam and the only ones on Jump Status. Because of D/16th Armor's hybrid nature, its operations were more like that of cavalry and mechanized infantry units than that of an armor company: separate and combined arms search and destroy (clear), screening and security, convoy security, strong point defense, and, occasionally, as dismounted infantry. The company even conducted mounted night operations long before the introduction of modern Night Vision Devices that enables modern armored and mounted forces to 'own the night'. The company's biggest assets were its mobility and firepower that were used fully in all combined arms operations of the 173d Airborne Brigade (SEP). One such operation was Operation Junction City.

In Feb 67 Operation Junction City was the largest operation of the Vietnam War. All or parts of 1 ID, 9 ID, 25 ID, 11 ACR, 196 LIB, and 173 ABN took part. 173 ABN led off Junction City with the Combat Parachute Assault on 22 Feb 67 by Task Force 2-503d, and the Drop Zone was secured by D/16th Armor. This earned the company the coveted Pathfinders Badge. The Company took part in every operation with the Brigade from the Mekong Delta to Southern I Corps. The Company's Battle Streamers and Decorations number thirteen and include the Meritorious Unit Citation. Members also wear the Presidential Unit Citation and Valorous Unit Award presented to the Brigade for these actions. An action for the Company to earn its own VUA was the Battle of Tuy Hoa North: The Assault on the Villages Nihn Tin 1, 2, and 3.

The operation for D/16th to rejoin the 4/503d INF on Operation Bolling changed in the early hours of 4 Mar 68 when the 5th Battalion, 95th Regiment (NVA) and the 85th VC Battalion attacked and briefly overran a II Corps Artillery Battery at the old French airfield at Nui Chiap Chai. The enemy task force had also attacked the ARVN 47th Infantry Regiment HQ's at Tuy Hoa City.

By 0700hrs on 4 Mar 68, D/16 was mounted and received orders to proceed north quickly as possible on Highway (QL) 1 to Nui Chap Chai (approximately 15 – 20 kms), clear it of the enemy, then go east across QL 1 and attack two enemy battalions in entrenched positions generally north to south. This was a mission ideally suited for armor: speed, mobility, firepower, and communications – shock action. By the time D/16 arrived at the airfield, the majority of the enemy had withdrawn eastwards into the three villages. The airfield was cleared of remaining resistance by the company and firmly put back into control of the artillery battery.

By mid-morning the company was on line across the breadth of the first two villages facing south by southwest. The villages of Ninh Tin 1, 2, & 3 were offset to each other eastwards by several hundred meters and a like amount running north to south on spits or fingers of land into a common open area (paddies and back water from the river inlet) just north of Tuy Hoa City proper. Essentially the two battalions, entrenched as

they were, were bordered by the South China Sea on the east, QL 1 on the west, and Tuy Hoa on the south. E/17th Cavalry with gun jeeps, was in a blocking position sitting on QL 1 facing east when D/16th Armor began its southward assault on the villages. The 1st and 2nd Platoons were the maneuvering elements, while the 3d Platoon was in a blocking position to cut down any enemy escaping from villages 1 & 2 and to protect the east flank. D/16 was in the attack, and the enemy was fixed and fixed good. It was a sound and classic tactic; armor in the assault with supporting dismounted infantry. Unfortunately, it was a battalion of the ARVN 47th Infantry Regiment and not the Sky Soldiers of the 173d Airborne Brigade.

With the 2nd Platoon in the lead, the platoons moved in a file westward to position themselves for a frontal assault on Ninh Tin 1. As the two platoons flanked on line, they came under heavy small arms and HMG fire. The platoons suppressed fire and over ran the enemy positions, but had to stop their pursuit of the fleeing enemy into the heart of the villages too soon as the ARVN Infantry were reluctant to press the fight. This proved to be a portent of worse things to come. The enemy soldiers that attempted to flee east, west, or south were cut down by interlocking fire by E/17 and 3/D/16.

While killing many of the enemy on the first assault, The company suffered 1 KIA and a number of wounded, not all of whom were dusted off and chose to remain with the company despite their wounds. While never at full strength (the fighting crews averaged three of four per vehicle), the company became quickly undermanned. One APC had only the driver remaining. The driver would drive forward, stop, climb out of his seat, get into the TC hatch, and fire the Browning .50 caliber HMG. Then he would reverse himself and repeat the cycle. Before the assault upon the second village the driver had a MAACV advisor and his Vietnamese RTO as crew manning the machine guns. The company's first replacements were the HQ's operations staff and company clerks (who were formerly of the line platoons). Later after nightfall, when D/16 had laagered into and onto the perimeter of the airfield, all company rear area personnel; clerks, cook's helpers, mechanics, and the supply and motor sergeants were on the line.

For the assault on village 2 the entire company was on line. By early to mid afternoon D/16th ARM had decimated all resistance and took a few more casualties as well. Despite a shortage of manpower, some mechanical and communications breakdowns, the company continued to press the fight against a numerically superior and fixed enemy. Which was more than could be said for the ARVN 47th Infantry. By this time D/16's Commanding Officer had requested several times for infantry from the 173d ABN BDE. Request denied. A CO of 4/503d INF had formed a hasty PZ and requested to come to the aid of D/16. Request denied. Political correctness triumphed over tactics, common sense, and loyalty.

After re-supply and replacements, D/16 began the assault on the final village of Ninh Tin 3. This would prove to be the most difficult. The enemy was the best entrenched as they had the time to reinforce their positions while D/16 was attacking the other two villages. And the enemy Task Force HQ's was located there as well. The enemy also engaged the airborne armormen with something that was conspicuously absent in the other two villages – Rocket Propelled Grenades (RPG's) – serious anti-armor. When the company lost two APC's and crew at point blank due to in-effective infantry support, it proved to be too much for the ARVN infantry battalion, and they

broke and ran. By this time, D/16's APC's were on top of the bunker line and the crew served weapons could not be depressed fully enough to fire effectively into the bunkers and bunker line. The company continued to fight without supporting infantry with M16 rifles, pistols, and grenades at close quarters for the remainder of the day. A number of personnel dismounted to clear the bunker line and protect the flanks of the APC's.

Although the company had essentially broken two enemy battalions, with the approach of nightfall with no supporting infantry, and a much-needed re-supply of grenades, rifle, and pistol ammo, the company was given the order to break contact. This proved easier said than done because of the lack of dismounted infantry, and contact had to be broken piecemeal with one fighting vehicle with a crew of two finally covering the company while under continuing hostile fire. The company pulled into and onto the perimeter of the airfield cleared earlier in the day. The CO ordered those wounded and not evacuated earlier dusted off. And the last of the company's rear area personnel replaced them on the line.

Aftermath 4 Mar 68

That D/16th Armor was decidedly victorious over a numerically superior force, there is no doubt: of the 206 enemy dead by body count, 137 were directly accredited to the company and the rest to helicopter gun ships, artillery fire, and TAC Air. The lack of any kills attributed to the ARVN underscores their failings. It was a victory at the cost of 8 KIA Sky Soldiers and many more wounded (50% casualties), and they were many singular acts of bravery and courage. The CO and the driver without a fighting crew each received the Distinguished Service Cross.

There were others who did not receive awards but contributed to the victory by D/16th Armor. Not the least of which was the company 1SGT, who with other senior NCO's of 4/503 INF humped ammo for re-supply. Men like the infantry company commander of 4/503d INF who pleaded on the Brigade net to enter the battle. Men like those of E/17th CAV who exhorted the company over the Company net to "drive on" when things were at their worst, when the ARVN supporting infantry fled. D/16 was never alone that day – it was The Herd.

The CO 173d ABN let it be known that D/16th Armor was to be awarded the Valorous Unit Award. This would have been truly unique. The 173d Airborne Brigade (SEP), while one of the smallest units fielded in Vietnam, was the highest decorated with 13 Medal of Honor recipients (10 posthumously), over 6,000 medals for heroism (Bronze Star with V Device or better), almost 7,000 Purple Hearts, and, sadly, over 1,700 names on black granite. This from a unit with only 25,000 men serving over a seven year period of almost continuous combat. Yet it was only three armor units in the Brigade who received or were nominated (at the time) for the VUA: A/1-69th Armor, assigned to the 173d Airborne Brigade in the Spring of 1968, E/17th Cavalry for Operation Cedar Falls, and D/16th Armor for the Battle of Tuy Hoa North. By August 68 some awards and decorations had been awarded; the new TO&E was soon to be acted upon, and the final draft for the VUA was completed and only had to be retyped and submitted.

Later there were other actions of D/16 that merited major decorations as well, such as in January 69. On that action 1st Platoon, again at Nui Chap Chai caught an NVA Regiment in the open and killed almost three hundred of the enemy with the loss of two

of its own.

The 173d Airborne Brigade (SEP) by late Spring 1968 had grown from a separate airborne light infantry brigade into a pocket division. Detached from 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) and 4th Infantry Division, respectively, and assigned to the Brigade in the spring were 1-50th Infantry (M) and 1-69th Armor. It was the assignment of 1-69th that spelled the end for the separate airborne armor company. It was an armor battalion with real tanks (M48-A3); it dwarfed and made D/16 more than redundant. This time also marked the last times the Brigade fought as unit and went from being GEN Westmoreland's "Fire Brigade", fighting as unit on the whole of Vietnam, to the "Pacification" role. No longer were there brigade and battalion-sized operations, but operations had devolved into company and platoon-sized 'point area defense'. This role was necessary for "Vietnamization" to succeed. Pacification and Vietnamization had replaced Search and Destroy in military lexicon and mission.

In Sep 68 the company was officially retired and its colors returned to the US and re-designated and returned to its parent organization as Troop D, 16th Cavalry. But the Brigade was reluctant to lose one of its original components organized in Okinawa, and it made an attempt keep D/16 within the 173d Airborne Brigade TO&E for the next year. With the colors, assets and personnel intact, the company was designated Tuy Hoa Armor Company, Provisional. The provisional unit, still referred to by everyone in the Brigade as 'D Company', was stood down for the last time on 31 Oct 69. Its assets and personnel were melded into E/17th Cavalry when the troop was issued the M551 Sheridan.

It is ironic that the armor company that had no tanks lived on as mechanized scout and infantry squads in the cavalry troop that received tanks to replace recoilless rifle gun-jeps.

Where we are today

D/16th Armor and Tuy Hoa Armor Company, Provisional members are spread across the country and most belong to the International Society of the 173d Airborne Brigade (SEP) and its local Chapters. Western States Chapter X has as members former CPT James Hickman, 1LT Frank Mantua, 1LT Dave Brest, SP5 James Olson, SSGT Paul Ross, SGT Mark Okazaki, SGT David Curtin, SP4 Donald Dunleavy, SP4 Phil Barbieri, PFC Joe Deforest, and MSG (Ret) David Hahn. Some are members of the 16th Cavalry Association. Many are aware that the 16th Cavalry Regiment is an active duty component of the US Army. All know of the Memorial and Dedication Ceremonies of the Vietnam Roll of Honor upon the 16th Cavalry Regiment Memorial on 19 Oct 02.

It was my singular honor and privilege to have served in Company D, 16th Armor, 173d Airborne Brigade (SEP).

Strike Hard and Airborne All The way!

Frank M. Mantua

XO/PLDR, D/16 ARM-173d ABN BDE (SEP); Feb – Aug 68
PLDR, C/1-1 CAV-1AD & TFO; Mar – Dec 67

TO&E 173d Airborne Brigade (SEP)
Spring 68

X

- SPT 319
- HHC 173
- CTT 12
- MHD 24
- MI (OB) 628
- RRU 404
- ARVN 18
- USAF 18

- 1 503
- 2 503
- 3 503
- 4 503
- 3 319
- SPT 173
- HHC 173
- CTT 12
- MHD 24
- MI (OB) 628
- RRU 404
- ARVN 18
- USAF 18

- D 16
- E 16
- B 17
- C SPT
- D SPT
- A SPT
- ADM SPT
- PROV SPT
- IPSD 39
- CTT 12
- MHD 24
- MI (OB) 628
- RRU 404
- ARVN 18
- USAF 18

- REPL
- PI 46
- APU 45
- MI 172
- 51

ASSIGNED _____
ATTACHED _____
MI: Military Intelligence Detachment
IPSD: Infantry Platoon Scout Dog
MHD: Military History Detachment
APU: Army Postal Unit
USAF: U.S. Air Force Control Party
PI: Public Information Detachment
CTT: Combat Tracker Team
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Vietnam Order of Battle By Shelby L. Stanton

U.S. News Books

Airborne Brigades



173d Airborne Brigade

Arrived Vietnam: 7 May 1965

Departed Vietnam: 25 August 1971

Locations:

Bien Hoa	May 65 - Oct. 67
An Khe	Nov. 67 - April 69
Bong Son	May 69 - Aug. 71

Authorized Strength	1966	1968
HHC	285	312

Commanders

Brigadier General Ellis W. Williamson	May 65
Brigadier General Paul F. Smith	Feb. 66
Brigadier General John R. Deane, Jr.	Dec. 66
Brigadier General Leo H. Schweiter	Aug. 67
Brigadier General Richard J. Allen	April 68
Brigadier General John W. Barnes	Dec. 68
Brigadier General Hubert S. Cunningham	Aug. 69
Brigadier General Elmer R. Ochs	Aug. 70
Brigadier General Jack MacFarlane	Jan. 71

Formed in May 1963, the 173d Airborne Brigade ("Sky Soldiers") began training for the type of warfare it would encounter in Vietnam and was sent to Vietnam from Okinawa as the first major U.S. Army ground combat unit. When committed to combat, the brigade represented the sole U.S. Pacific Command (USAPACOM) quick-reaction reserve and was to be on temporary duty only until it could be replaced by an airborne brigade from the United States. Despite these optimistic withdrawal intentions the brigade remained in Vietnam for almost the duration of the U.S. effort. A particularly elite unit, it also operated with an Australian battalion during the early part of its service. The brigade became famous at the Battle of Dak To in November 1967 when it fought an entrenched North Vietnamese Army regiment on Hill 875 and, in some of the most bitter fighting of the war, captured the hill on Thanksgiving Day, earning the Presidential Unit Citation. It was also noted for its combat parachute jump during Operation JUNCTION CITY 22 February 1967 in War Zone C of Tay Ninh Province. It had been initially sent to Vietnam to provide infantry security for the Bien Hoa airbase complex but launched into a series of intensely fought offensive operations including striking into War Zone C during September - November 1966 in Operation ATTLEBORO. The brigade struck this same location again early in 1967. Throughout 1968 the brigade fought in Binh Thuan and Binh Dinh Provinces. By 1969 the brigade was engaged in extensive pacification efforts and route security (securing portions of QL 1, Vietnam's only major north-south highway) in the An Lao Valley of Binh Dinh Province. The following years were spent in similar operations within the II Corps Tactical Zone.

173d Airborne Brigade Order of Battle:

Assigned and Attached Units

Brigade Infantry

1st Battalion, 503d Infantry (Abn)
2d Battalion, 503d Infantry (Abn)
3d Battalion, 503d Infantry (Abn)
4th Battalion, 503d Infantry (Abn)

Brigade Reconnaissance

Company D, 16th Armor
Troop E, 17th Cavalry (Armored)

Attached Allied Battalion

1st Battalion, Royal Australian
Regiment

Attached Unit on Temporary Assignment

3d Battalion, 506th Infantry (Airmobile)

Brigade Artillery

3d Battalion, 319th Artillery
(105mm) (Airborne)

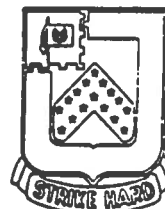
Brigade Aviation

335th Aviation Company
(Airmobile)

Brigade Support

173d Support Battalion (Abn)
173d Engineer Company
534th Signal Company
173d Signal Company (Prov)

Armor



Company D, 16th Armor (Airborne Antitank)

Arrived Vietnam: 6 May 1965

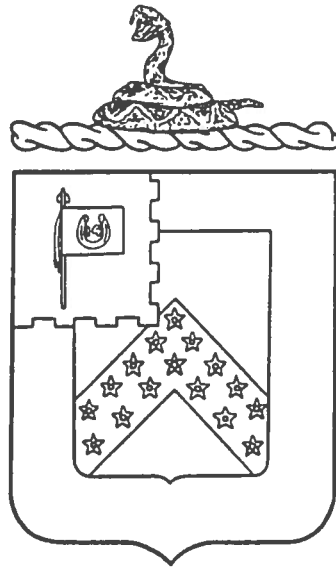
Departed Vietnam: 25 August 1968

Previous Station: Okinawa

Authorized Strength: 101 (1966)

Company D, 16th Armor was equipped with M56 self-propelled 90mm antitank "Scorpion" guns. The company was assigned to the 173d Airborne Brigade in Vietnam until August 1968. It should be noted that on 2 September 1969, after the unit had already departed Vietnam, it became Troop D of the 16th Cavalry.

16th CAVALRY



CAMPAIGN STREAMERS

World War II

Rhineland
Central Europe

Vietnam

Defense
Counteroffensive
Counteroffensive, Phase II
Counteroffensive, Phase III
Tet Counteroffensive
Counteroffensive, Phase IV
Counteroffensive, Phase V
Counteroffensive, Phase VI
Tet 69/Counteroffensive
Summer-fall 1969
Winter-spring 1970
Sanctuary Counteroffensive
Counteroffensive, Phase VII
Consolidation I
Consolidation II
Cease-fire

DECORATIONS

Meritorious Unit Commendation, Streamer embroidered VIETNAM 1965-1967 (Co D, 16th Armor cited for period 5 May 1965-4 May 1967; DA GO 48, 1968)

Company D, 16th Armor (173d Airborne Brigade)

Capt. Josef C. Jordan, Jr., May–September 1965; Capt. John E. Dunlop, Jr., September 1965–April 1966; Capt. Karl F. Nehammer, April–October 1966; Capt. John K. Waters, October 1966–May 1967; Capt. Robert D. Mackey, May–November 1967; Capt. Robert F. Helmick, November 1967–April 1968; Capt. James S. Hicks, April–December 1968; Capt. Ronald A. Bogue, December 1968–July 1969; Capt. John M. Weaver, July–October 1969.



1st Battalion, 77th Armor (Division Armor)

Arrived Vietnam: 27 July 1968
 Departed Vietnam: 23 July 1971
 Previous Station: Fort Carson

Authorized Strength	1968	1970
Battalion	614	615

The 1st Battalion, 77th Armor was part of the 1st Brigade Task Force of the 5th Infantry Division (Mechanized) and served in the Quang Tri area of Vietnam. It was equipped with M48A3 90mm-gun tanks.

Tuy Hoa Armor Company, Provisional

No Insignia
 Authorized

Arrived Vietnam: 14 April 1969
 Departed Vietnam: 1 November 1969
 Previous Station: Vietnam
 Authorized Strength: Unknown

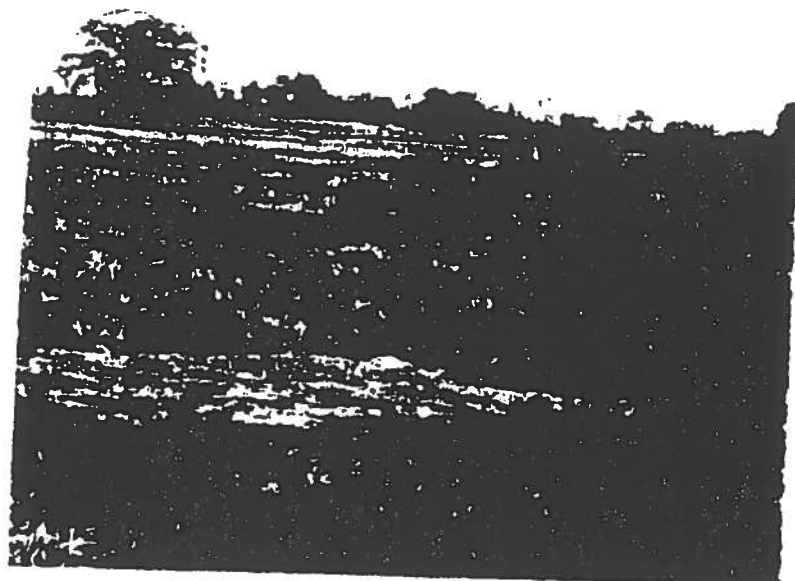
The Tuy Hoa Armor Company (Provisional) was established by the 173d Airborne Brigade to provide reaction firepower during pacification efforts in Binh Dinh Province, where primary emphasis was given hamlet and village protection in order to enable South Vietnamese territorial forces to conduct searches behind a protective shield of U.S. and regular Vietnamese units.

THE ARMORMEN

The mobility and firepower of Company D, 16th Armor, have enabled its paratroopers to perform quite a variety of missions with excellent success over the past few months. Mounted in their 17 armored personnel carriers, which they operate in lieu of their authorized Sheridan tanks, the armormen have provided everything from fire base security to a search and destroy force—even including night ambushes.

"The company is unusual in many respects," said Captain Robert D. Mackey, Los Angeles, company commander from May to December. "This is the only airborne tank company in the Army, and also the only separate tank company. We have more radios than an infantry battalion, and we provide all first and second echelon maintenance for our complex equipment from our own resources."

D Company's weaponry makes it a formidable force to tangle with. Each APC is armed with a .50-caliber machinegun, two M-60 machineguns, and a rocket launcher. In addition, there are three APCs with 90 mm recoilless rifles. The two-inch-thick aluminum armor will stop rifle bullets and



"twice as fast as a battalion"

shell fragments.

Since May, the armormen have served mainly as convoy security and fire support base security, although they have conducted search and destroy missions on occasion. "We can sweep an area twice as fast as an infantry battalion can," said Captain Mackey, "if the terrain is right. Rolling hills in the highlands or marshy paddies around Tuy Hoa are no problem. Neither is jungle brush—after all, our APCs will knock down trees up to ten inches in diameter. Steep hills are really the only place we can't operate effectively."

While at Dak To during Operation Greeley, the paratroopers of D Company logged some 4800 miles of convoy duty, and secured three different fire support bases. At Tuy Hoa the APCs averaged 100 miles per day per vehicle. At times the company ran as many as nine convoys a night, each containing ten trucks escorted by three APCs.

According to Captain Mackey, one of the company's most interesting missions has been their night ambushes at Tuy Hoa. Not having to dig in, the company would go into position just after dark, much later than an infantry ambush, and would move very slowly to keep down the noise and dust. After camouflaging their tracks, the armormen would settle down and wait, keeping careful watch through starlight scopes.

"One night," recalled Captain Mackey, "six enemy soldiers walked within 200 meters of our ambush without seeing those big APCs. When we gave chase, we encountered a group of 30 and then another group of 15, running in the opposite direction. We called for more of our tracks to handle the second bunch, and we got them in 20 minutes—from 7000 meters away, cross-country, in the dark. It was a profitable evening."



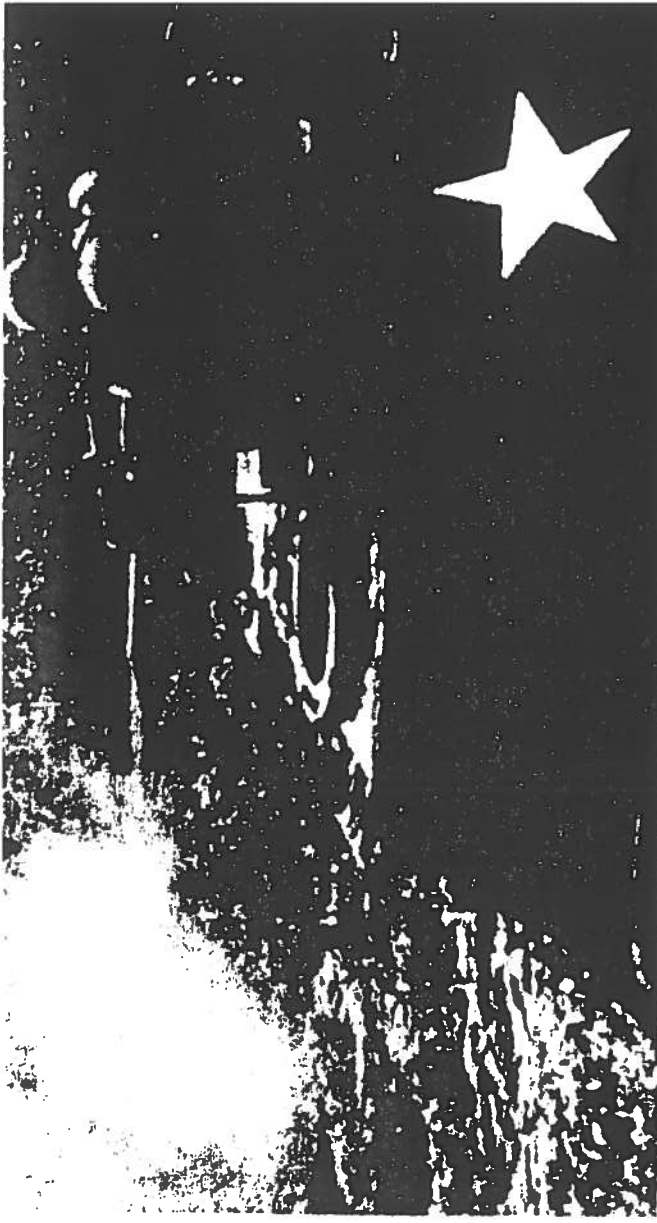
Going into a herringbone formation

The Armormen

Company D of the 16th Armor (D/16th) has added an important dimension to the war effort in Vietnam. Combining mobility and firepower, armored personnel carriers (APC's) can move in almost any type terrain to close with and destroy the enemy. They can sweep an area twice as fast as foot soldiers, and heavy jungle brush is no problem—an APC can knock down trees up to ten inches in diameter.

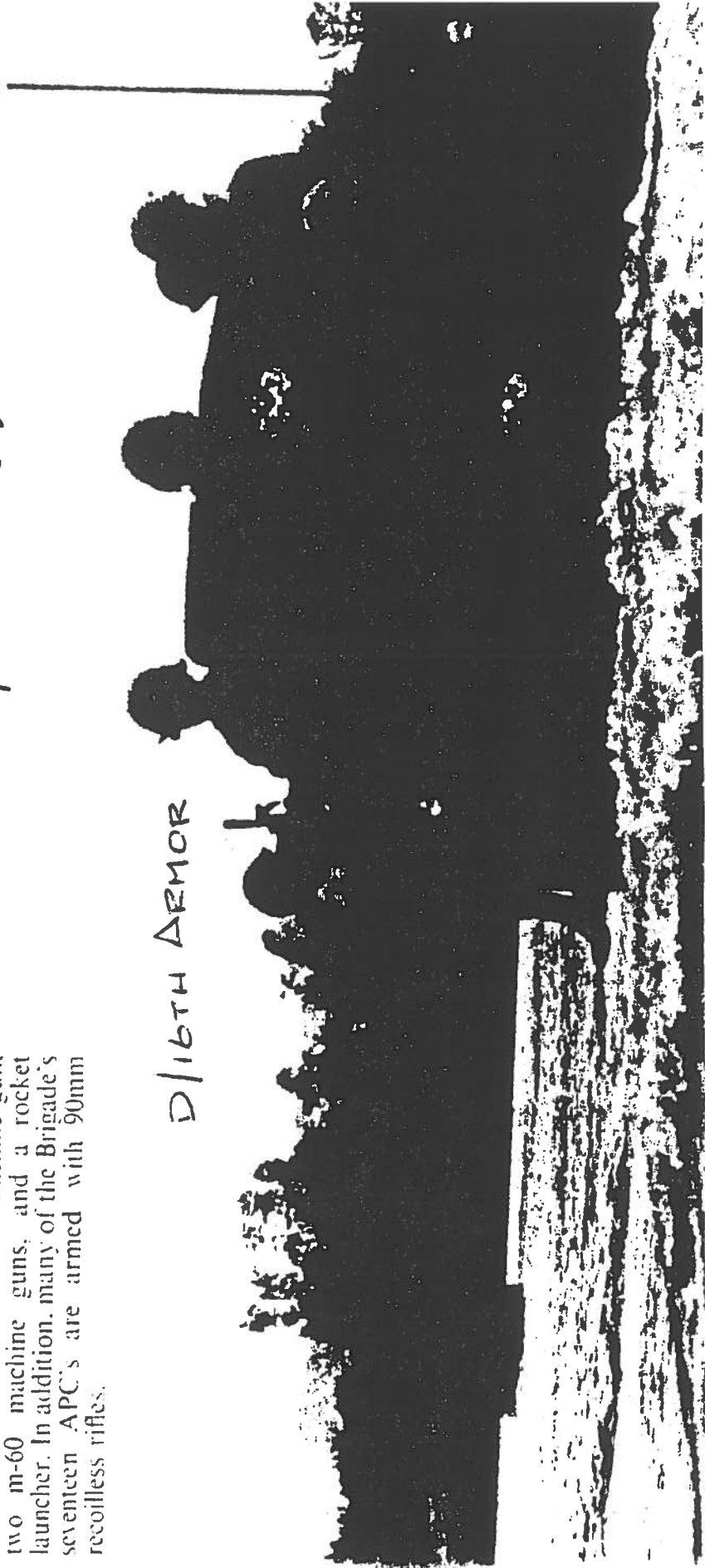
The APC is an excellent mode of transportation for personnel under fire. The two-inch thick aluminum armor will stop rifle bullets and shell fragments.

D Company's weaponry makes it a formidable force to tangle with. Each APC is armed with a .50-caliber machine gun, two m-60 machine guns, and a rocket launcher. In addition, many of the Brigade's seventeen APC's are armed with 90mm recoilless rifles.



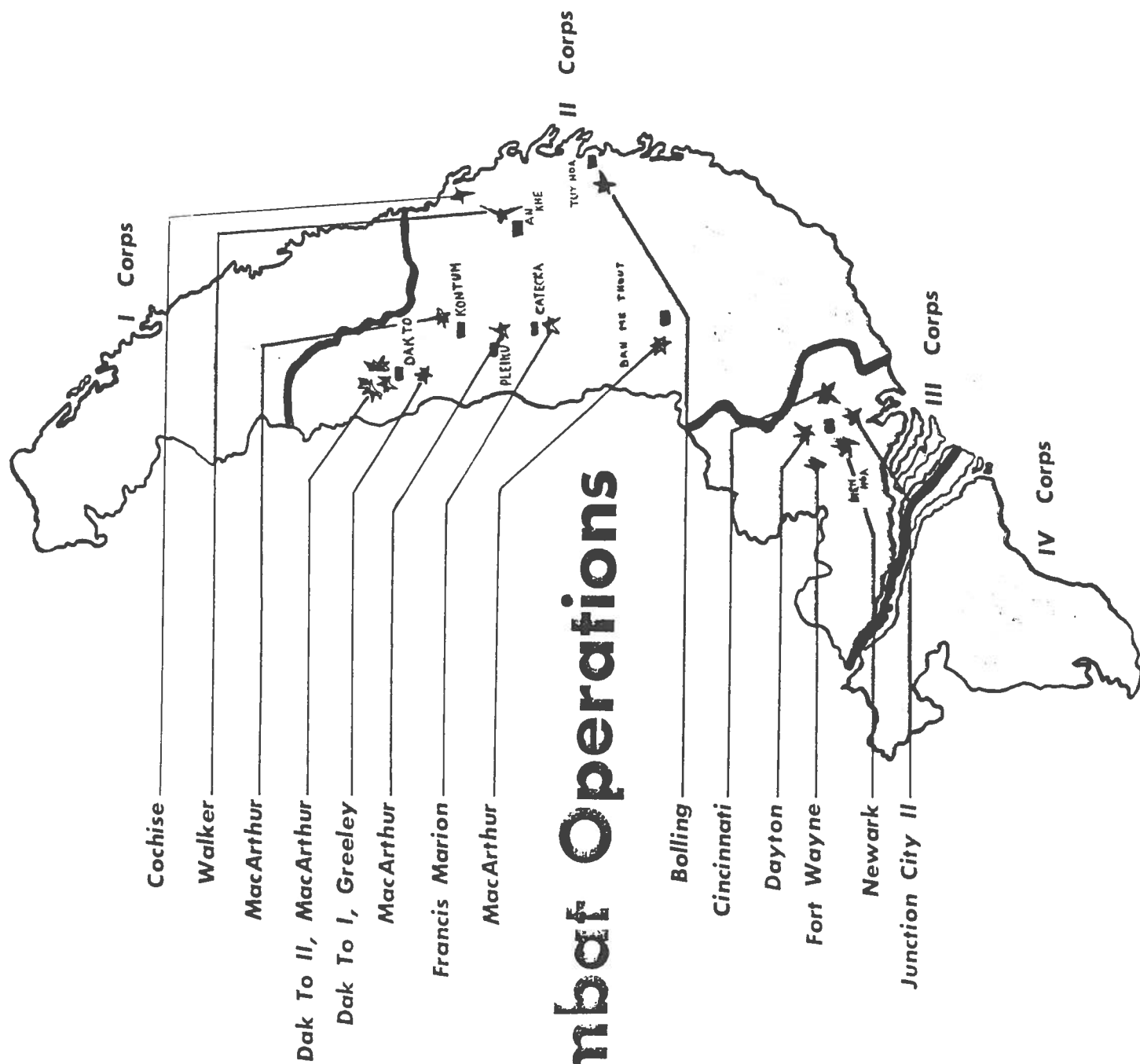
1/50TH INF (M)

D/16TH ARMOR



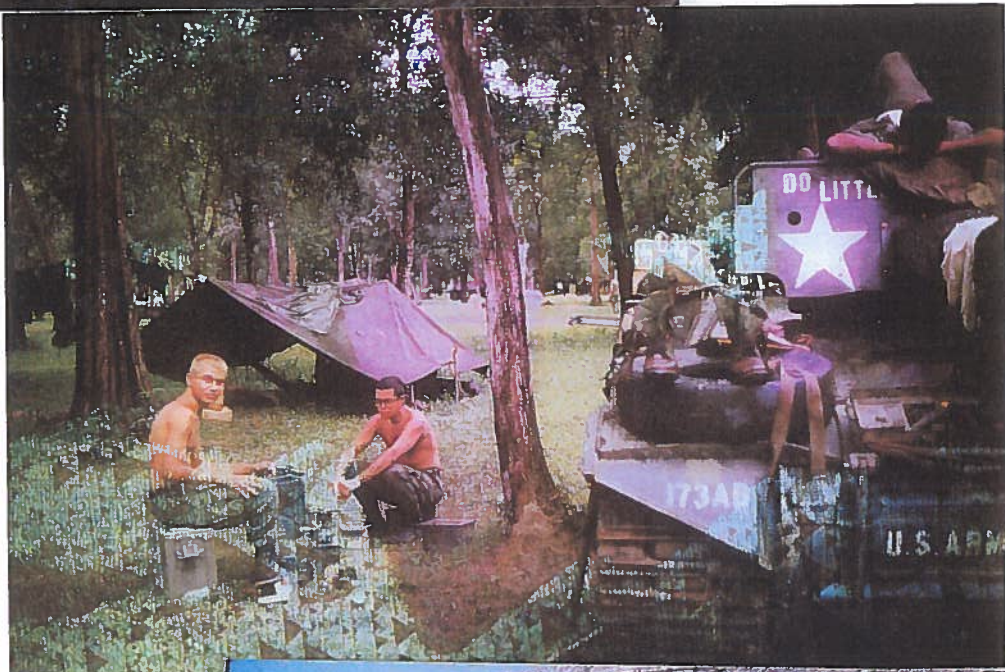
Combat Operations

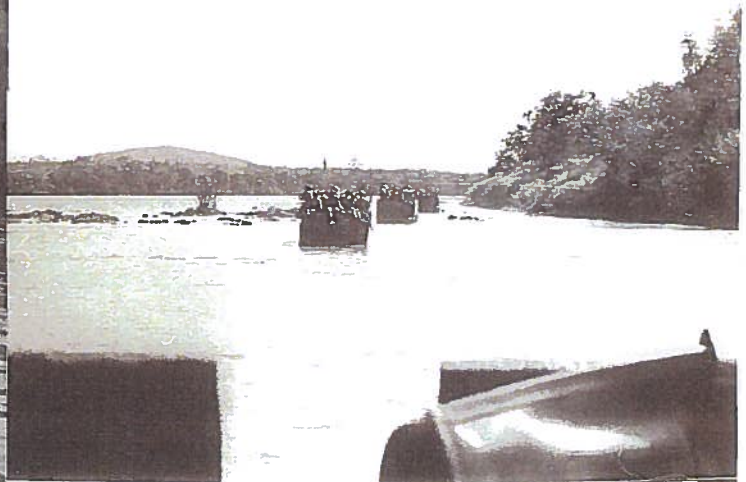
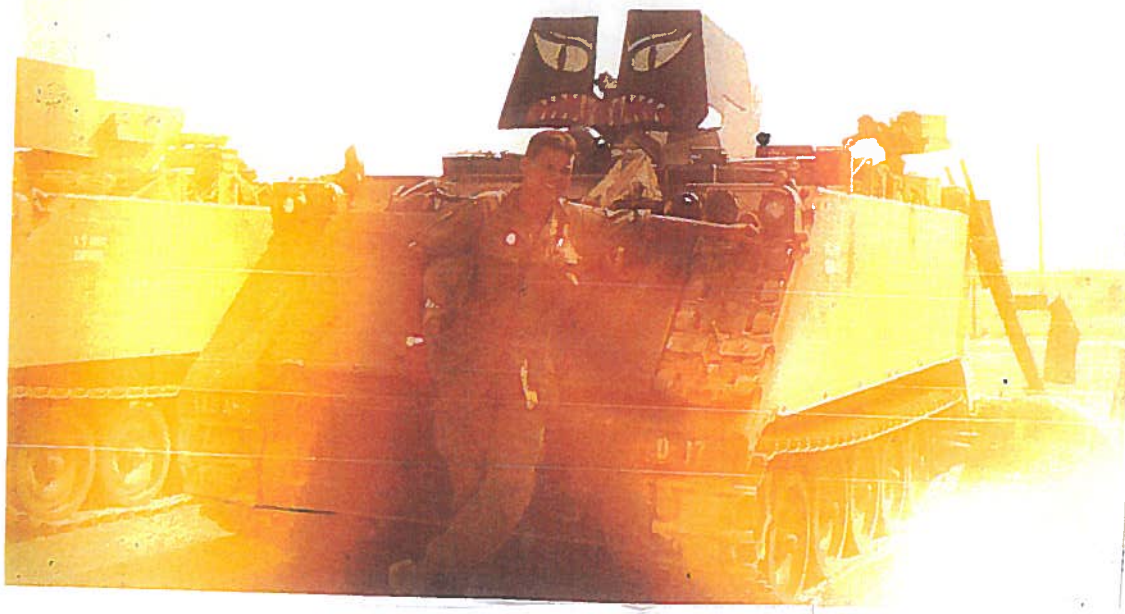
Combat Operations

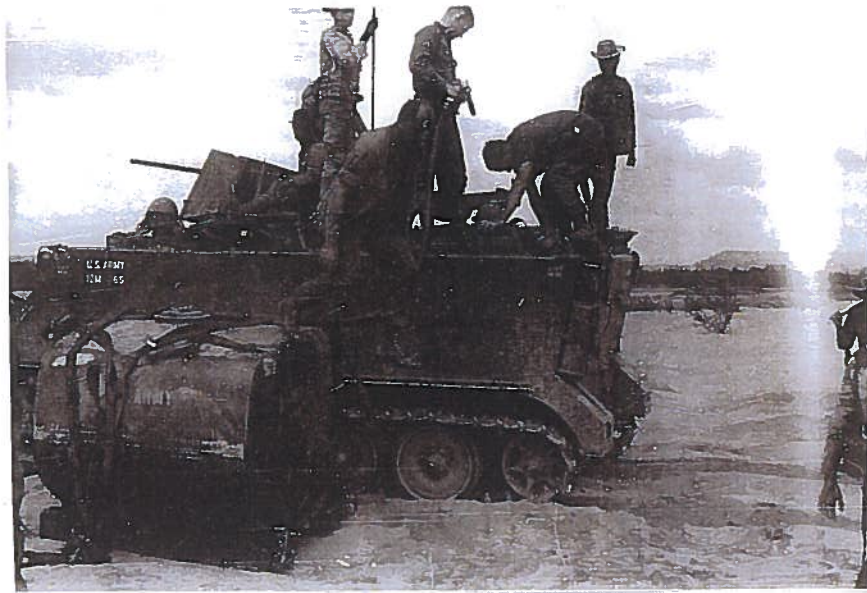


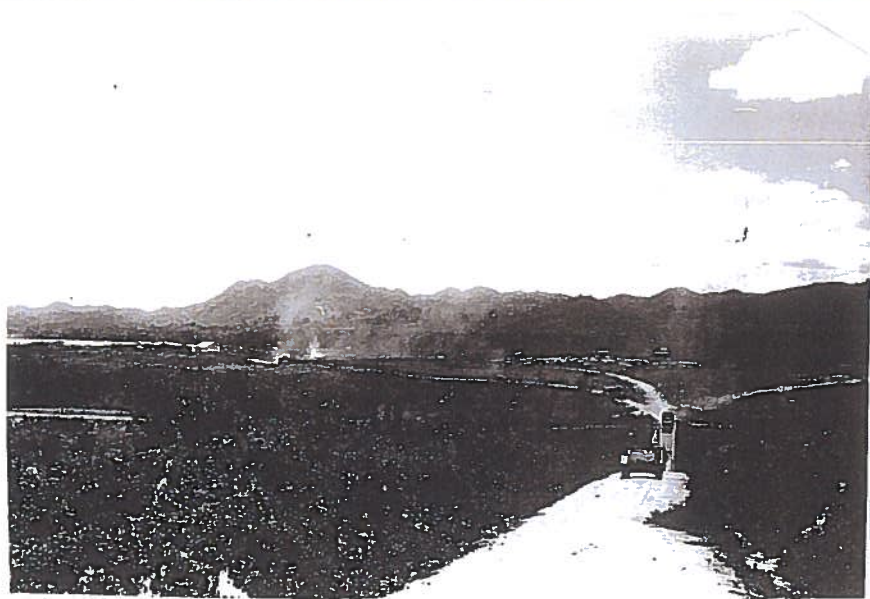
M56 Scorpion SPAT (Self Propelled Anti Tank)













of a small self-contained, highly-trained heliborne force." A typical "Eagle Flight" would consist of the following: one armed Huey serving as the command and control ship, and having on board the U.S. Army aviation commander; seven unarmed Hueys gave the fire support and escort to the troop carrying helicopters; and one Huey usually designated as a medical evacuation ship. The "Eagle Flights" were usually on a standby

On 1 January 1966, the 173rd Airborne Brigade moved to the Mekong delta to operate in the notorious Plain of Reeds. The brigade had moved from Hau Nghai Province to the delta by land and air. The air element came into Bao Trai airstrip and comprised the 1st Battalion (Airborne), 503rd Infantry, the 2nd Battalion (Airborne), 503rd Infantry, the 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, and Battery "C", 3rd Battalion, South Australia.





**The Battle of Tuy Hoa North
Assault on the Villages of Nihn Tin 1, 2, and 3
4 Mar 68**









Battle Descriptions and After-action Reports
4 Mar 68

Protecting the rice harvest

BY ILT John Emmert

In the early morning hours of 4 March, soldiers of two enemy battalions launched an ambitious attack against the 47th ARVN Headquarters complex north of Tuy Hoa City.

Well-fortified in three villages to the east, the 5th Battalion, 95th NVA Regiment and the 85th Local Force Viet Cong Battalion planned every move but one. They weren't ready for D Company, 16th Armor.

The airborne armormen, who along with the 4th Battalion, 503d Infantry were conducting Operation BOLLING, sized up the situation and immediately maneuvered to outflank the enemy.

The first platoon of armored personnel carriers was deployed in full defilade as a blocking force between the ocean and the enemy force while the ARVN infantry blocked from the south and west. The remaining two armor platoons linked with ARVN infantrymen and supported by helicopter gunships and F-100 Fighters of the 308th Tactical Fighter Squadron, began their push against the enemy elements.

The paratroopers battled fierce resistance to smash through the first and second enemy held villages and began their siege on the third, where the enemy's well-fortified, deeply-entrenched command post was located.

As the allied team approached the last village, enemy troops tried to escape across open rice paddies but were cut down by interlocking .50 caliber machine gun fire from the platoon of APC's in the blocking position.

Stopped by the approach of nightfall and the lack of supporting infantry, the airborne armormen regrouped after the seven-hour onslaught.

Of the nearly 200 enemy killed in the combined allied forces operation, D company was credited with killing 137 NVA by body count while suffering seven dead and 21 wounded.

Rocked by the battle with the armor company, scattered and shaken in several small engagements by the airborne infantrymen of the 4th Battalion, 503d Infantry, the enemy was rooted from his hideout and kept on the run during the last three months in Operation BOLLING.

Set on the rich coastal rice plains of Phu Yen Province, the battlefield around Tuy Hoa has been the scene of death for over 200 enemy. Destroying the 95th NVA Regiment and protecting the rice crops and civilian population are missions the airborne elements conducted with great success since operation BOLLING began in September 1967.

In addition, the paratroopers have destroyed enemy propaganda efforts and won the confidence of villagers who are comprised mostly of agricultural workers and fishermen.

The airborne infantrymen put Kit Carson Scouts (former NVA soldiers hired and trained by the Brigade S-5) to good use in mid April. The scouts led Charlie Company, 4th Battalion, to an NVA company size base camp still under construction.



Twilight Rendezvous

Hosier

RTO locates his position



Combat Assault

Rice

Paratroopers favorite pastime.

Outbreak At Tuy Hoa

The morning of January 30th, C Battery, 6th Battalion, 32nd Artillery, requested a reaction force to assist in defending their fire support base located at the Tuy Hoa North Airfield. D Company, 4th Battalion, moved in by helicopters and cleared the fire support base and then became heavily engaged with an NVA force in a village to the south. They were later reinforced by C Company and supported by elements of the 47th ARVN Regiment. After heavy fighting and airstrikes, the village was taken on January 31st.

During February the Brigade continued to drive on in Operations BOLLING, MACARTHUR, and WALKER, undergoing a number of moves by motor convoy.

On March 4th, Company D, 16th Armor, made the largest contact that the Brigade had seen for several weeks. It was mid-morning when the airborne armormen were called to attack and clear an enemy force from the vicinity of the Tuy Hoa North Airfield.

After four hours of fighting that resulted in 200 communist dead, the armormen cleared the airfield and remained in position while the ARVN units pursued the enemy, maintaining contact until late in the afternoon.



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b. The major weakness of the enemy is his inability to maintain contact due to his marginal logistics system.

c. Recent successes by US, ROK and ARVN troops (4-503d Infantry) reflects the vulnerability of the NVA to psychological operations. The theme of the psychological operations should be to surrender to the ARVN and the direction of surrender should be given in the broadcast/leaflets.

3. Enemy Capabilities:

a. Continue to build up their units through infiltration, recruitment and conscription. Recent reports indicate that the 5th NVA Division has received replacements and is nearing the posture to launch offensive operations.

b. Attack installations and friendly forces in northern central PHU YEN Province with up to 4 combat effective battalions. These 4 battalions would consist of the 4th, 5th, and 6th Battalions of the 95th NVA Regiment and the 85th Local Force (LF) Battalion. The 30th Main Force (MF) Battalion is not believed to be presently combat effective. Attack in central and southern PHU YEN Province with the same combat battalions as listed; however, this effort in south PHU YEN could be reinforced by the 188 NVA Regiment. This would bring the strength of the enemy force to 7 combat battalions.

c. Continue harassment, terrorist and unconventional warfare activities throughout the province. The pontoon bridge at CQ 201351 is a target of particular interest as is the large bridge across the SONG BA River at TUY HOA.

d. Conduct battalion sized attacks reinforced by local forces on weakly defended district headquarters and outposts.

e. Reinforce the TUY HOA Valley area with elements of the 188 NVA Regiment within 5 days.

f. Combat Efficiency (PHU YEN Province, AO BOLLING): In PHU YEN Province, the 85th LF Bn is apparently regrouping and attempting to rebuild its combat effectiveness for continuing operation's in TUY AN District. The heavy casualties inflicted on the 11th (AKA 4th) and 13th (AKA 6th) Bn's, 95th NVA Regt in early April 1968 by ARVN/ROK forces southwest of TUY HOA City has seriously impaired the combat effectiveness of these Bn's. The 12th Bn, 95th Regt, has remained out of contact and is believed to be rebuilding its combat potential in northwestern TUY HOA District. The 30th MF Bn will probably continue to conduct limited, small scale harassing operations in eastern HIEU XUONG District.

(b) Summary of Operation: In February Brigade Headquarters (-), 4th Bn-503d Inf, C and D Btry 3d Bn-319th Artillery, E Troop, 17th Cav and D Company 16th Armor participated in Operation BOLLING through 7 February. On 7 February Brigade Headquarters (-) and E Troop 17th Cav joined other Brigade Forces in Operation MACARTHUR. From 8-29 February 1968 the 4th Bn 503d Infantry, C and D Btry 3d Bn 319th Artillery and D Company 16th Armor participated in Operation BOLLING during which they were involved in 47 incidents, 30 of which were friendly initiated. The Brigade line up in Operation BOLLING remained the same throughout the month of March. The largest contact on 4 March was made by D-16th Armor when they smashed two enemy battalions (5th Bn 95th NVA Regt and the 85th VC Bn) which had attacked the 47th ARVN Headquarters at TUY HOA. Over 200 enemy soldiers were killed in the combined FVMAF operation.

(c) Significant Contacts:

1. 060315 Feb 68: CQ 1548 A/4/503 sighted 4 VC outside of their perimeter and took them under fire. Results: 1 VC KIA (BC).

2. 061145 Feb 68: CQ 091492 C/4/503 sighted and engaged 1 VC wearing khakis and rucksack moving NNE. Results: 1 NVA KIA (BC)

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- 2 VC KIA (BC).
3. 110300 Feb 68: CQ 047435 C/4/503 ambushed 2 VC. Results:
4. 041210 Mar 68: CQ 159471 D-16th Armor reinforced the 47th ARVN Regt in contact with two battalions. Contact continued until 041930. Results: 5 US KIA, 16 US WHA, 2 US MHA, 137 NVA KIA (BC).
5. 121100 Mar 68: CQ 102988 D-16th Armor had one M113 hit a mine. Area was searched and several VC were engaged. Results: 4 US WHA, 2 VC KIA (BC).
6. 181215 Mar 68: CQ 045446 A/4/503 observed 10 VC in the open. Artillery, airstrikes, and gunships were called. Results: 4 VC KIA (BC).
7. 042350 Apr 68: B/4/503 made contact with estimated 45 VC/NVA vic CQ 046466. Results: 1 VC/NVA KIA (BC).
8. 06 Apr 68: A/4/503 fired on 15 VC with weapons. Results: 1 VC KIA (BC).
9. 072050 Apr 68: CQ 053393 A/4/503 made contact with 7 VC while moving to an ambush site. Results: 2 VC KIA (BC).
10. 171334 Apr 68: C/4/503 sighted one NVA Co digging into their front. Artillery and A/S called. Results: 1 NVA KIA (BC), 1 AK-47, 1 81mm mortar CIA.
11. 171436 Apr 68: CQ 8844 D-16th Armor while escorting a convoy received SA from both sides of the road, head track destroyed by a mine. Artillery and A/S supported. Results: 1 US WHA, 1 APC destroyed; 5 VC/NVA KIA (BC).

(d) Terrain and Weather:

1. Terrain: The area of interest is located in PHU YEN Province and is bounded by coordinates BQ 7000, BQ 7060, CQ 1060 and CQ 3000. The eastern boundary is the South China Sea. Three-fourths of the area is mountainous and forested. Most of the remainder of the area is flat land used either for cultivation of rice, or other lowland crops. Along the coast there are rolling hills and sand dunes except where the mountain outcroppings meet the sea. Since most of the area consists of mountains and hills, there is no drainage problem. The major drainage system is formed by the DA RANG or SONG BA River and its tributaries. This river traverses the center of the AO from west to east, (BQ 7039 - CQ 6346). The tributaries flow generally north-south depending upon their location relative to the SONG BA. The river empties into the South China Sea. Vegetation in the plains area is predominantly rice fields. Further inland, dense broadleaf evergreen forest covers the mountain ridges with canopy rising in excess of 80 feet. Interprovincial Route 7B and Route 1 are the main lines of communication in the area.

2. Weather: The month of November, December and January are months of the Northeast Monsoon season in the area of operations. Surface winds during the period will prevail from the north-northeast. Wind speeds range up to 16 knots. Winds gusting to 30 knots may be expected in the immediate vicinity of thunderstorms, along exposed locations during strong northeasterly flow, and area under the influence of typhoons or tropical storms. Calm conditions are observed most frequently during night and early morning hours.

Precipitation from mid-December to March is light to moderate showers that occur in the mornings in the area of operations. Periods of three to five days without rain are common during the period. Cloudiness during the period includes considerable cloudiness in the mornings with ceilings below 1000 feet common in the exposed valleys. In general, the afternoons along the coast are partly cloudy with most clouds above 2000 feet. The major effect of clouds on operations will occur during the early or mid-morning hours in the exposed coastal area. Temperatures will range from 80 to

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platoon of 1-69th Armor provided FSB security. A-3-319th Arty remained with the 1st Bn 503d Inf but B-3-319th Arty was located at Camp Enari. The 2d Bn 503d Inf began movement to An Khe to exchange places with the 3d Bn 503d Inf as the Camp Radcliff Quick Strike Battalion. The 3d Bn 503d Inf moved by air to Kontum Airfield. On 27 February B-1-503d Inf engaged an NVA platoon (vic 2A203947) resulting in 3 US KHA, 11 US WHA, 4 NVA KIA, 1 RPD, 3 AK-47's and 1 SKS captured. In mid afternoon C-3-8th Inf (OPCON to 1st Bn 503d Inf) came under mortar and SA fire for two hours until contact was broken. D-1-22d Inf engaged an unknown size enemy force (vic AB825950) while searching a bunker complex and suffered 24 WHA. A-1-8th Inf was reverted to its parent unit on 27 February. The next day, 28 February, C-3-8th Inf was returned to its parent unit also. On 28 February closed the Task Force 173d Abn Bde (-) pressed search and destroy operations in the Kontum area making daily contact with NVA units.

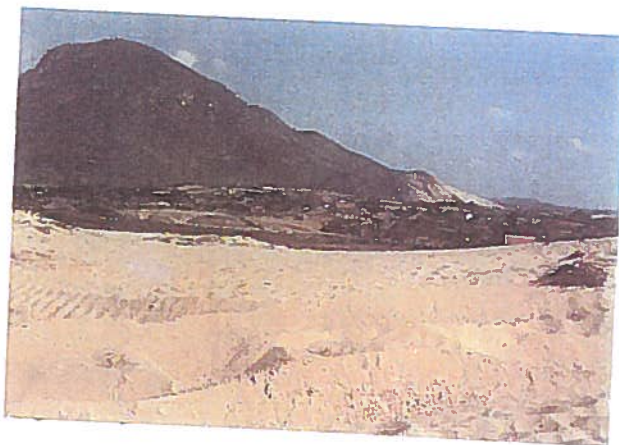
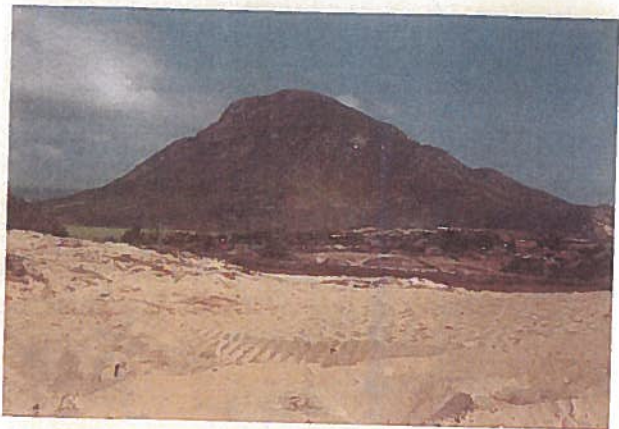
In February the 173d Airborne Brigade (-) continued Operation BOLLING in Phu Yen Province with the mission of finding, fixing and destroying the 95th NVA Regiment; providing security for the civilian rice harvest (in conjunction with the ROK 28th Regiment and the 47th ARVN Regiment); furnishing security for the 577th Engineer Battalion and 173d Engineer Company along Highway 436, routes 68 and 2D as required and providing a rapid reaction company. The 4th Bn 503d Inf in conjunction with the Camp Strike Force elements form the USSF Camp at Dong Tre and Cung Son, and Task Force Mitchell (D Co 16th Armor and E Troop 17th Cav) conducted search and destroy operations west of Tuy Hoa and helped mop up the aftermath of the NVA TET offensive in Tuy Hoa. (See Annex 2 for report on TET fighting in Operation BOLLING).

On 8 February the 173d Airborne Brigade (-) departed Tuy Hoa to assume operational control of the Brigade's two Battalion Task Force Forces (TF POWERHOUSE) in Kontum Province. The 4th Bn 503d Inf assumed control of Operation BOLLING and the remaining Brigade forces which consisted of C and D Battery, 3d Bn 319th Artillery and the 32d Artillery provided general support in the area of operations. Throughout the rest of February Task Force 4th Bn 503d Inf continued search and destroy operations along with the Camp Strike Force elements making only light contact. Elements of the 51st Chemical Detachment flew crop destruction missions in VC territory and Engineer troops conducted mine sweeping operations. D Co 16th Armor split its platoons between fire base security and convoy escorts to Vung Ro Bay. On 26 February the Brigade S-5 started training of 17 KIT CARSON SCOUTS (former NVA/VC) for use in the Brigade. The enemy avoided contact during the month of February.

In February the 3d Battalion 503d Infantry continued to secure the Camp Radcliff/An Khe complex, secure Highway 19 in the Tactical Area of Responsibility, conduct operations within the TAOR and to support revolutionary development in the Walker TAOR. The 3d Bn 503d Infantry conducted operations in AO WALKER until 27 February when they exchanged places with the 2d Bn 503d Inf; the 2d Bn 503d Inf then assumed responsibility for AO WALKER. The Brigade exchanged Battalions again in March when the 1st Bn 503d Inf replaced the 2d Bn 503d Inf and continued operations. The Brigade made an effort to exchange infantry battalions about every month so that each battalion would have a chance to utilize the Brigade's rear area services stationed at Camp Radcliff. The 173d Support Battalion continued to furnish guards and emergency provisions for the defense of Camp Radcliff. For a closer break down of operations of the Quick Strike Battalion see the 3d Bn 503d Infantry's Combat After Action Report (17 January - 27 February 1968) attached as inclosure D.

The 3d Bn 503d Inf employed company size search and destroy operations, multiple night ambushes with local Vietnamese Forces, security missions along Highway 19 constantly held one company as a rapid reaction force. Contact with enemy forces light during February coming mainly from sniper fire and small ambushes along Highway 19. On 0400 hours 6 February Camp Radcliff received approximately 100 rounds of 82mm and 60mm mortar fire resulting in 1 US KHA, 24 WHA (one serious) and 22 air-aid damaged. Enemy mortar positions were engaged by SA, M-79, mortar and artillery with unknown results. On 8 February rapid reaction to an enemy ambush killed 5 and captured 5 weapons. Camp Radcliff was again mortared on 18 February but returned fire terminated the attack after a dozen rounds. Close coordination and planned operations with Popular Forces were highly successful, stopping enemy incursions along the southern Camp Radcliff perimeter.

Nui Chiap Chai





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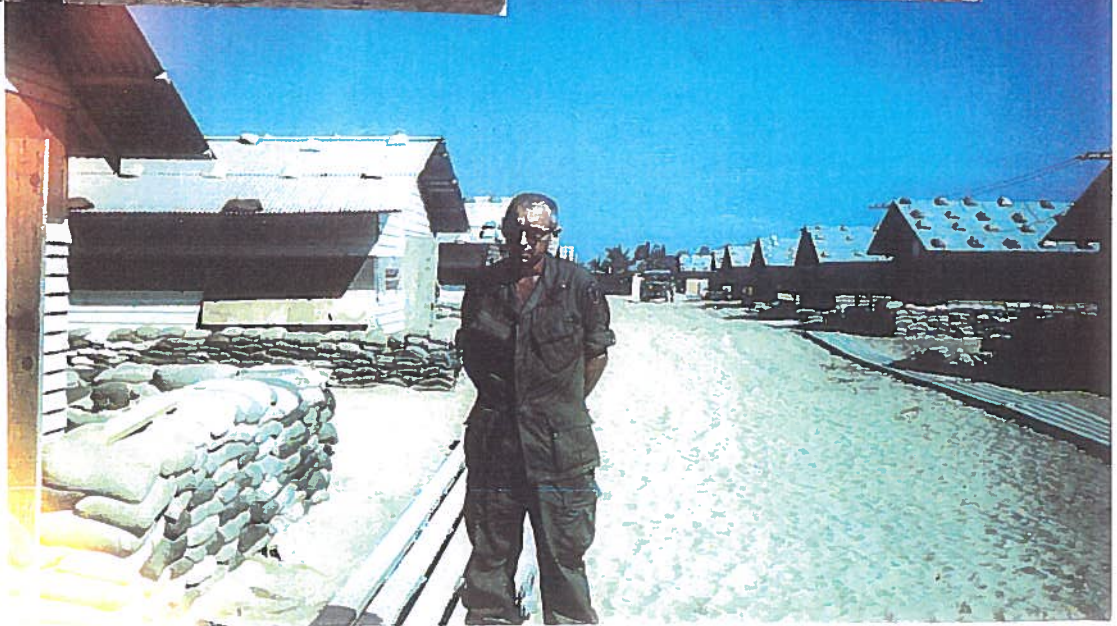
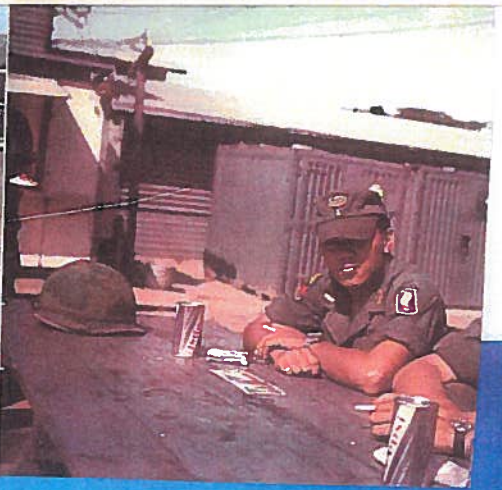
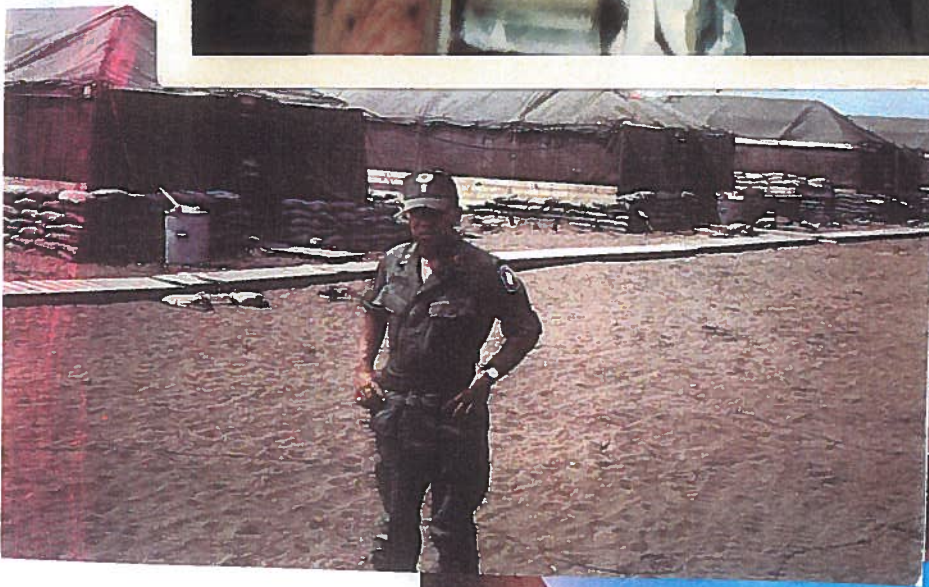
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ARVN Awards Ceremony
Cross of Gallantry Awards for DOA 4 Mar 68



CPT Hickman, Company Commander
1LT Mantua, Executive Officer
1SGT Rickman, Top Soldier
Late Spring 68



**Tuy Hoa Armor Company, Provisional
Deactivation 31 Oct 69
LZ Uplift RVN**





