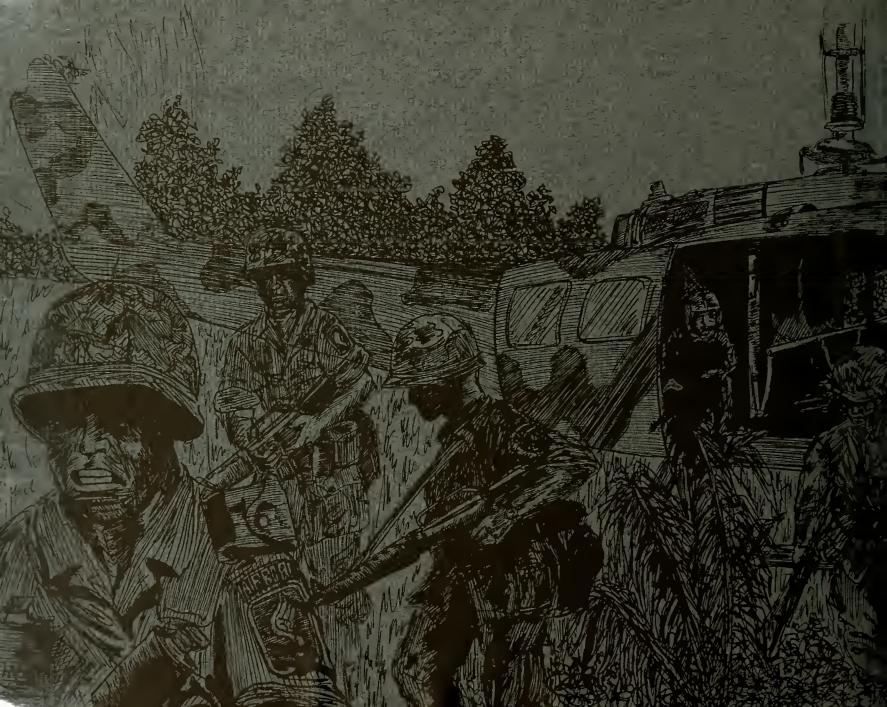
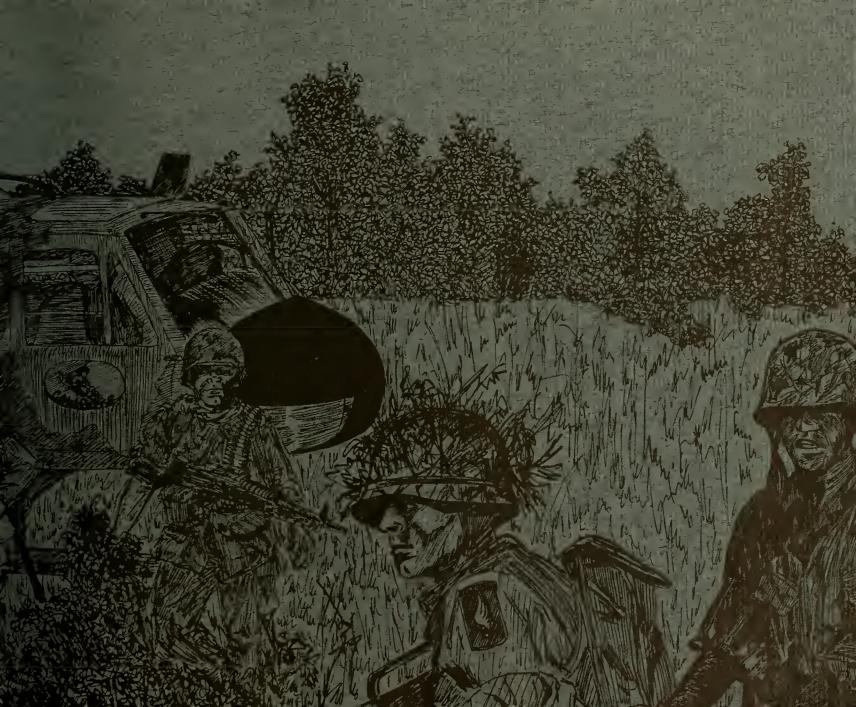


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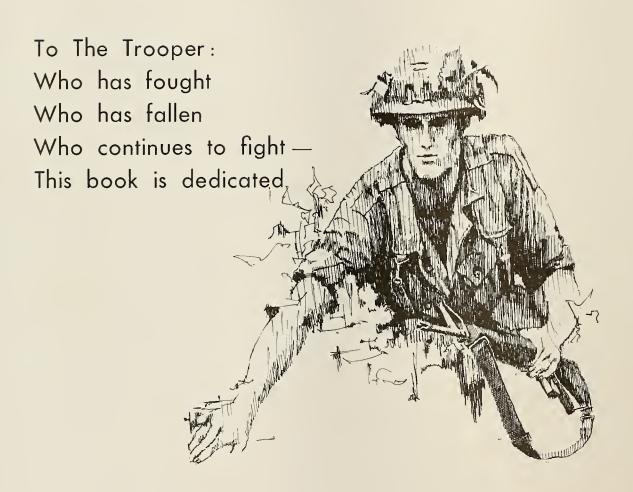
CYBE MARRIMENE BRIGADE (SEPARATE)













VIETNAM THE SECOND YEAR

173D AIRBORNE BRIGADE
(SEPARATE)
A PICTORIAL HISTORY

Published by

The Brigade Information Office

Lt. Jeffrey S. McKay-editor

Sp4 Donald C. Hall—assistant editor



TROOPERS OF THE 173d AIRBORNE BRIGADE:

Your accomplishments in the Vietnam conflict cannot be told in a book many times the size of this one. Your acts of heroism and selfless service to others are too numerous to recount in a single pictorial memento. There can be no doubt that you have earned for yourselves as individuals, and for the Brigade as a unit, the title "Professionals." In my view there can be no higher accolade!

Commanding the 173d Airborne Brigade was the highpoint of my military career as well as being my most satisfying assignment. You made it such by your devotion to duty and to each other, by your demonstrated military skills, by your aggressive and tenacious pursuit of the enemy, and by your compassion for those who needed it. The US Army has never fielded a more dedicated or professionally capable unit!

My admiration and my best wishes for your continued success and safety go with you in future campaigns against the Viet Cong.

Major General Paul F. Smith



Brigadier General Paul F. Smith, a master parachutist with two combat jumps, assumed command of the 173d Airborne Brigade (Sep) from Brigadier General Ellis W. Williamson on 21 February 1966. Prior to taking command of the 173d, General Smith served as Deputy Commanding General and Chief of Staff of U.S. Army Task Force Alpha, later designated as U.S. Army Field Force, Vietnam.

An enlisted reservist for seven years, General Smith was commissioned a second lieutenant and called to active duty in April 1942. Participating in the Normandy, Ardennes-Alsace, Rhineland and Central Europe campaigns with the 507th Parachute Infantry Regiment, he rose from company commander to battalion commander and made combat jumps at Normandy and Wesel and was awarded a Silver Star, three Bronze Stars, the Purple Heart, Combat Infantryman's Badge and the Distinguished Unit Citation.

Before coming to Vietnam in July 1965, he served concurrently as Chief, Army Section, MAAG, Republic of China and Commanding General, U.S. Army Force, Taiwan, the U.S. component of the Taiwan Defense Command.

General Smith was born 15 November 1915 at Taunton, Mass., and is married to the former Margaret McClintock of Richmond, Va. They have two daughters, Sonja and Sandra.

General Smith has since been promoted to Major General.



SKY SOLDIERS:

During the past year you have continued to distinguish yourselves and the Brigade. Because of the timing of our big personnel turnover, this book represents for most of you—your year—the year in which you brought new honor and fame to the Brigade, the year in which your deeds were in the headlines around the world, the year you climaxed with the first combat parachute assault of the war in Vietnam.

To those of you who have gone home or are about to leave, I offer my thanks and congratulations on the magnificent job you have done. I wish you continued success and good fortune. Wherever you are, you will still be a Sky Soldier which means the best.

For those of you who have recently joined the Brigade, there is a great challenge. It is now your turn to write your page in history. It is up to you to keep the Sky Soldiers on top. I know you will not fail. I wish you the best of luck and good hunting.

AIRBORNE—ALL THE WAY! Brigadier General John R. Deane Jr.

Brigadier General John R. Deane, Jr., took command of the 173d on 28 December 1966. General Deane served as Deputy Commanding General and Chief of Staff, I Field Force Vietnam, from 5 February 1966, till he assumed the duties of Assistant Division Commander, 1st Infantry Division on 27 July 1966.

General Deane enlisted in the Army on 1 July 1937, and subsequently won an appointment to the United States Military Academy. He graduated as a second Iieutenant of infantry in 1942. During World War II, General Deane served with the 104th Infantry Division, rising in rank from second lieutenant to lieutenant colonel. While serving in the European Theater of Operations, General Deane was awarded the Silver Star for gallantry in action, the Bronze Star, the Purple Heart, and the Combat Infantryman's Badge.

General Deane is known throughout the 173d by his radio code name "Uncle Jack." Included among the decorations he has been awarded in Vietnam is the Distinguished Service Cross, our nation's second highest award for valor.

General Deane was born in San Francisco on 8 June 1919, the son of Major General John Russell Deane and Mrs. Margaret Wood Deane. General Deane and his wife, the former Elizabeth Heard, have five children: John Russell III, Nancy Heard, Margaret Alicia, Christopher Richard, and Elizabeth Heard.





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ORGANIZATION



ORGANIZATION

The 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate) was organized 25 June 1963 from the 2d Airborne Battle Group, 503d Infantry. The brigade thus inherited the proud tradition of the 503d Parachute Infantry that jumped into combat on Corregidor in 1944.

Under the command of Brigadier General Ellis W. Williamson, the 173d trained hard on its home island, Okinawa, and throughout the Asian Theatre. Extensive airborne, guerrilla, and jungle warfare training in Taiwan, Korea, and Thailand brought the unit to a high pitch of readiness. It was from the many parachute exercises on Taiwan that the 173d paratroopers became known as the "Sky Soldiers."

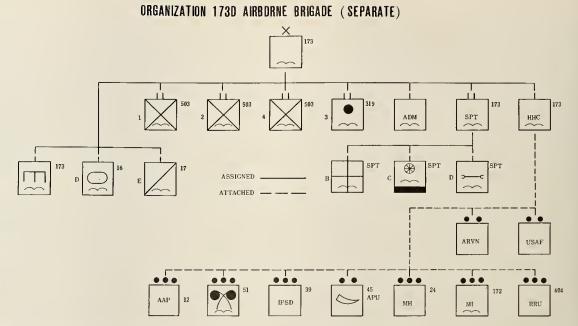
As the first separate brigade in the United States Army, the 173d had to prove the validity of a new concept. Less than two years after its organization, the brigade was called upon to prove its mettle in combat.

On 5 May 1965, lead elements of the brigade with supporting equipment, ammunition, and supplies, departed Okinawa by aircraft. The remainder of the brigade deployed by ship two days later.

Since that time, the Sky Soldiers have established an unparalleled record of firsts in the Vietnam War. The 173d was the first Army ground combat unit to arrive in Vietnam, the first to enter the Iron Triangle, and War Zones "C" and "D". The Sky Soldiers spearheaded the combat effort in the Delta and the highlands, and conducted the first joint American-Vietnamese operation.

It came as no surprise then, that the 173d was chosen to make the first combat paraehute assault since the Korean Conflict.

Today, the 173d continues to earry the fight to the Viet Cong. It has earned the proud heritage it bears—it has earned the right to remain a separate brigade.













INFANTRY

The infantry battalion is the primary fighting force of any combat unit. It is the infantry battalion that searches out and destroys the enemy. All other units support the infantry, for, as the infantry goes, so goes the battle.

The 173d has three infantry battalions: the 1st, 2nd, and 4th Battalions of the 503d Infantry (1,2, and 4/503d). Each 750 man battalion, with supporting artillery and armor, can operate for an extended period of time

as a self-sustaining unit.

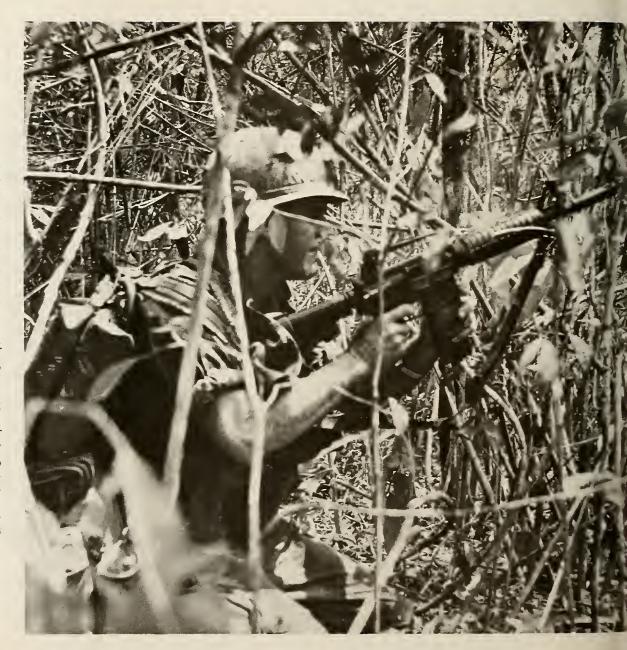
On 3 November 1966, General Westmoreland presented the nation's highest unit award for heroism—the Distinguished Unit Citation—to the men of the 1st Battalion. The unit earned the citation for the Battle of Bien Hoa on 8 November 1965. 403 Viet Cong fell at the hands of the 1st battalion that day.

The 2nd Battalion was chosen to conduct the first parachute assault of the Vietnam war. On 22 February 1967, paratroopers of the "We Try Harder" battalion jumped into combat to initiate Operation JUNCTION

CITY.

The 4th Battalion arrived in Vietnam 25 June 1966 and immediately joined the 173d Airborne Brigade. Under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Michael D. "Iron Mike" Healy, the men of the 4th Battalion came to join the fight. Since that time, the "Geronimo" paratroopers have carved out a distinguished combat record.

The airborne infantryman wears two symbols of his accomplishments: the parachutist's wings and the Combat Infantryman's Badge. He is an elite and proud soldier.











ARTILLERY

The 3d Battalion, 319th Artillery, (3/319th), composed of 3 firing batteries and a head-quarters and service battery, provides the brigade's heavy fire support. Each firing battery delivers direct fire support to one of the infantry battalions.

The battalion has 18–105mm howitzers which fire a thirty-five pound projectile at ranges up to 11,000 meters. The mission of the artillery is to deliver swift, accurate, and continuous fire support to the maneuver elements.

elements.









CAVALRY

Troop "E" of the 17th Cavalry (E 17th) is a unique outfit. It provides both aerial and ground reconnaissance for the brigade. The Cav's Aero-Rifle Platoon moves by jeep to patrol and recon roads—it moves by helicopter to search and clear an area. Under the surveillance of an airborne commander, the Aero-Rifle Platoon employs small unit tactics to defeat the Vict Cong in his backyard.

The Cav's Long Range Reconnaissance Platoon (LRRP) accepts only volunteers with previous combat experience. Dressed in soft caps and camouflaged "tiger suits," the LRRP infiltrates squad size teams into enemy-dominated areas and gathers intelligence. It is to the LRRP's credit that they have produced the honor graduate of every MACV Recondo school to date.





ENGINEERS

The 173d Engineer Company builds, destroys, and fights. The Engineers build bridges, destroy enemy base camps, and fight as infantry. They accomplish a wide variety of Engineer tasks: from providing water points, to surveying, exploring, and demolishing V.C. tunnels.

Engineers are frequently attached to an infantry battalion during an operation. The engineer moves with the infantryman—he carries an M-16 rifle and a satchel of explosives

plosives.

When a large tunnel complex is discovered, the 173d Engineer "tunnel rats" are called in to finish the job.





ARMOR

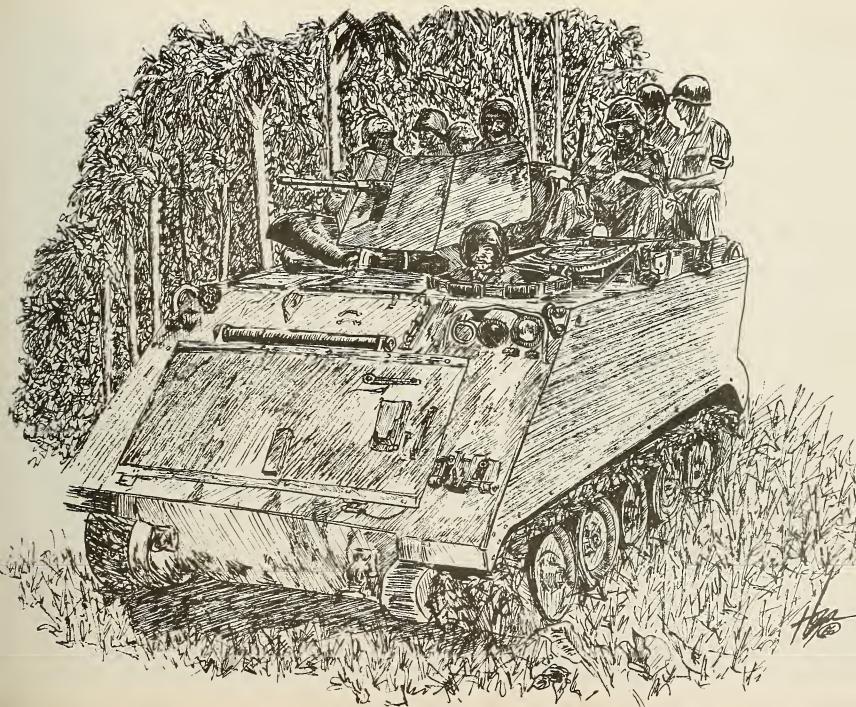
"D" Company of the 16th Armor (D/16th) gives the brigade the firepower and shock effect of armor. D/16th's versatile Armored Personnel Carriers (APC's) provide rapid ground mobility for the commander, and armored protection for road movement. The APC's also carry troops into battle, and establish security for brigade positions.

Armored mobility brings a heavy punch into the Viet Cong's backyard. The APC can move in any type of terrain—from jungle to rice paddy.









SUPPORT

The 173d Support Battalion performs a great variety of combat support functions. Company "B" (Medical) operates the Brigade Clearing Station, and provides life saving teams of doctors and aidmen. Company "C" (Supply and Transport) is responsible for the storage and movement of brigade supplies. Its aerial equipment support platoon furnishes parachute support. Company "D" (Maintenance) accomplishes third echelon maintenance of all brigade equipment. Support Battalion is also responsible for commanding the brigade rear area elements.









HEADQUARTERS AND ADMINISTRATION

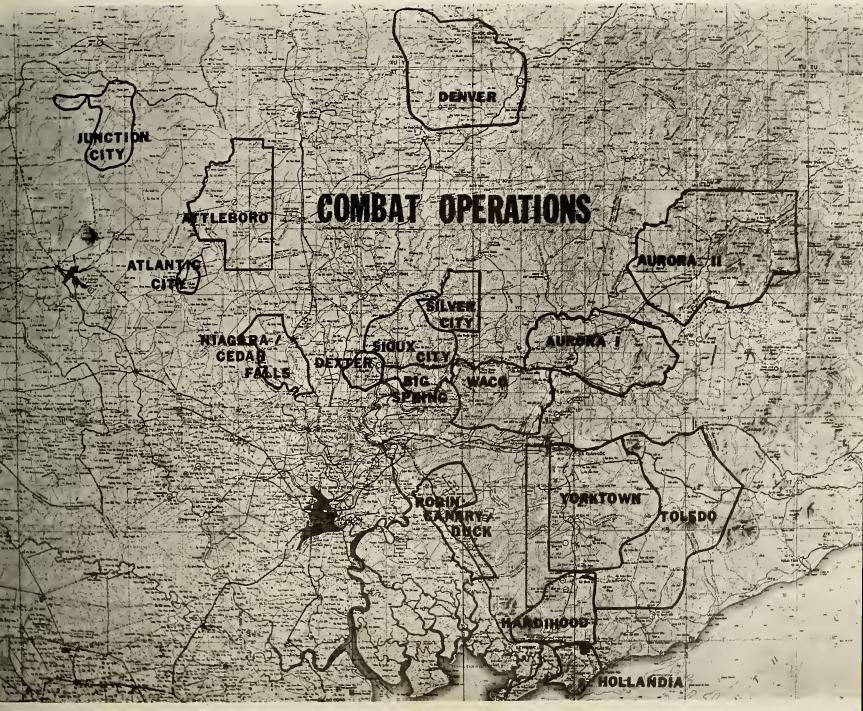
Brigade Headquarters and Headquarters Company, and Company "A" (Administration), are composed of many varied sections. Headquarters Company is responsible for the many attachments to the brigade: 404th Radio Research Unit, 39th Infantry Platoon Scout Dog, 51st Chemical Detachment, 172d Military Intelligence Detachment and others. It is also responsible for establishing and securing the Brigade Forward Command Post.

Administration Company also handles a variety of tasks. The Adjutant General and Finance Sections, as well as the 45th Army Postal Unit, fall under Company A's control.









SILVER CITY

9-22 March 1966

The 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate), including elements of the 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, conducted a heliborne assault near the Song Be River in War Zone "D" to initiate Operation SILVER CITY. The first few days of the operation consisted of thorough screening of the area, leading to the discovery of vast quantities of food, munitions, bunkers, tunnel systems, documents, and several large VC base camps.

The seventh day of Operation SILVER CITY will long be remembered by the troopers of the 173d, for on this day the 2 503d Infantry Task Force was attacked from all directions by the 501st VC Battalion. The troopers held their perimeter while inflicting heavy losses on the guerrillas. Resupply of needed ammunition was effected during the battle by helicopter at no small risk to equipment and crews. Numerous tactical air strikes were initiated with great effectiveness. The VC had to resort to chaining their machine gunners to the tripods of their weapons, but even these measures could not stop the crack troopers of the 173d.

The 1st Battalion, 503d Infantry was directed to reinforce the 2d Battalion during the battle. The VC element was nearly annihilated by this time and chose to break contact rather than tackle two battalions of Sky Soldiers. Four hours after initial contact, all VC were routed or destroyed.

The after-action mop-up patrols counted a total of 302 VC bodies with only seven US losses, the highest kill ratio to date. Throughout the rest of the operation it was indicated that an estimated 150 additional VC dead had been dragged away.



DENVER

10-25 April 1966

The next task was to check the steady infiltration of NVA and VC into War Zone "D". With this objective in mind, the 173d conceived Operation DENVER, a search and destroy mission to be conducted in the vicinity of Song Be Sector in the northern half of Phouc Long Province.

The Brigade Task Force began deployment on 10 April, and upon arrival in the area of operation, eagle flights and "show of force" patrols were dispatched to suspected locations of Viet Cong installations. These patrols continued throughout the operation, discovering several rice caches (yielding 34.4 tons) and a total of 2,167 documents.

There were no major actions during Operation DENVER as the VC elements encountered were generally of squad size or smaller.

DEXTER

4-6 May 1966

In early May, the brigade initiated Operation DEXTER, a three day search and destroy mission in the northwest portion of Bien Hoa Province. Reconnaissance and intelligence reported that the area west of the Dong Nai River was a main VC infiltration route to War Zone "D". The mission of the 173d was to find the enemy, check his entry into "D" zone and destroy or evacuate his provisions. During the three day operation, the Sky Soldiers and allied Australian units moved through the area of operation meeting little resistance from the enemy.

Operations such as DENVER and DEXTER plainly illustrated that the Viet Cong were losing their long hold on War Zone "D".





HARDIHOOD

16 May - 8 June 1966

Late in May, the brigade deployed to Phouc Tuy Province on Operation HARDIHOOD.

The first day (D-Day) of Operation HARDIHOOD consisted of deployment of the Brigade Task Force to the Vung Tau area. Patrols were immediately dispatched on reconnaissance and ambush missions. During the next two days, the Sky Soldiers met with stiff opposition. On 19 May the 1 503d Infantry became engaged with an estimated fifty VC. The firefight that ensued resulted in twenty VC dead with minimal friendly casualties.

On 20 May, the 1 503d Infantry, in conjunction with the 3d Battalion, 43d ARVN, was occupying blocking positions to the north of Long Phouc when Alpha Company made contact with three to five Viet Cong. Pursuit of the VC led the airborne company to extensive and wellfortified enemy positions. Shortly thereafter, Charlie Company linked up with Alpha in an attempt to cut off the VC positions. At the first light of day, the 1st Battalion

At the first light of day, the 1st Battalion launched an all out assault on the VC fortifications. The enemy broke contact and fled after a thirty-minute engagement. The Sky Soldiers continued the attack on all sides of the enemy positions, searching and destroying bunker and tunnel complexes in the area.

Throughout Operation HARDIHOOD the brigade continued its thorough sweep of the Long Phouc area, resulting in the discovery of intricate tunnel and bunker complexes. By 8 June, when the operation terminated, 48 VC were known dead, with an additional 30 estimated killed in action. Over one hundred enemy suspects were captured.





HOLLANDIA

9-17 June 1966

The brigade deployed to the Long Hai Peninsula, east of Vung Tau, to initiate Operation HOLLANDIA. It was believed that two VC regiments (274th and 275th) and their controlling headquarters (5th Division) were located north of the operational area within Phouc Tuy Province. The Task Force of the 173d was therefore directed to probe the area to deny Viet Cong entry so that a proposed construction site might be secured.

Throughout the operation, the "checker-board" method of saturation was employed to insure thorough screening of the area. Footprints of fleeing VC were observed on several occasions. Two deserted base camps revealed sizeable quantities of rice and miscellaneous equipment.







YORKTOWN

23 June - 8 July 1966

Operation YORKTOWN commenced on 23 June in Xuan Loc Province, approximately 37 miles east of Bien Hoa.

Initially, the Brigade met only sporadic resistance; however, on 29 June, three platoons of Company A, 2 503d Infantry became engaged with an enemy force 75-100 strong. The Viet Cong employed M-79 grenade launchers and 50 caliber machineguns on the Sky Soldiers to no avail, for after a five hour fight the VC were surrounded. The enemy broke contact, risking artillery fire. Twenty or more Viet Cong were estimated dead or wounded.

The brigade continued routine search and destroy missions throughout the area, meeting intermittent contact. Meanwhile, E/17th Cavalry and D/16th Armor simultaneously conducted roadrunner security operations to the south and east along Routes 1 and 2 respectively.

The brigade concluded Operation YORK-TOWN on 8 July 1966, with 25 VC killed by body count and another 23 estimated

killed in action.







AURORA I

9-17 July 1966

The objectives of Operation AURORA I conducted in northern Long Khanh Province were primarily search and destroy; however, the brigade was also concerned with Viet Cong tax collection activities in the area. Numerous reports indicated that the VC were threatening local civilians and forcing them to comply with their taxation demands. With the introduction of E/17th Cavalry and D/16th Armor, the majority of the collection points were eliminated.

AURORA II

17 July - 3 August 1966

Operation AURORA II commenced on 17 July with brigade elements deploying by air and road convoy to the Vo Dat-Phouc Lam region, approximately 80 kilometers northeast of Bien Hoa. The mission of the operation was essentially the same as AURORA I, that is, search and destroy, security and anti-tax collection operations.

Operation AURORA II was characterized by light enemy contact, however, on 23 July 1966, 25 enemy sampans were sighted and subsequently destroyed by gunships, tactical

air and artillery fire.





TOLEDO

10 August - 7 September 1966

On 10 August the 173d initiated the first phase of Operation TOLEDO, deploying to the portion of Phouc Tuy Province known as the May Tao Zone. Interrogation of a Viet Cong captive revealed that the VC forces had begun to depart with the introduction of US forces into the operational area.

The brigade, in an attempt to cut off the enemy's retreat, further deployed to the Cam My area. The contact which resulted from the 28 day search and destroy operation was

primarily brief.

Intelligence reports, however, revealed the suspected location of the 5th Viet Cong Division Headquarters. On 19-20 August, armed helicopters employing machinegun fire, 40 mm grenades and 2.75" rockets, swooped down on the suspected target. Subsequent intelligence reports indicated negative activity in the suspected headquarters area, indicating either its destruction or displacement.

Helicopter support provided during this operation was extremely effective in preparing the way for infantry heliborne assaults, as well as providing security for the vehicles of

E/17th Cavalry and D/16th Armor.

The success of Operation TOLEDO can be measured by the vast quantities of weapons, ammunition, food, medical equipment and installations confiscated or destroyed. The Sky Soldiers uncovered over 125,000 rounds of small arms ammunition, over 50 tons of rice, 10 base camps, 75 huts and 5 tunnel systems. The damage done to "Charlie's" resupply effort was certain to disrupt activity in the May Tao Secret Zone.









ATLANTIC CITY

13-22 September 1966

On 13 September the 4/503d Infantry deployed by C-123 Aircraft to the vicinity of Dau Tieng, approximately 65 kilometers northwest of Saigon. Their mission was to reinforce 25th ARVN Division elements reinforce 25th ARVN Division elements located near Dau Tieng Airfield, and provide security for the US and ARVN units in that area. Bravo Battery of the 3/319th Artillery was selected to support the operations of the 4th Battalion at Dau Tieng.

The introduction of the troopers of the 4th Battalion provided the security desired for the airstrip, and on 22 September the infantry and artillery troops departed Dau Tieng by C-123 aircraft—closing in at Bien Hoa Airbase.

Hoa Airbase.

Intelligence indicated that the area contained several VC elements including the 9th VC Division Headquarters; however, small unit patrolling resulted in no contact with referenced VC. Roadblocks, boobytraps, punji pits and an observation tower were discovered in the areas adjacent to the Dau Tieng Airstrip site.









SIOUX CITY

26 September - 9 October 1966

On 26 September the 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate), minus the 4th Battalion previously committed on Operation ATLANTIC CITY, deployed to the Xom Cat region, approximately 23 kilometers northeast of Bien Hoa. It was believed that this region of dense forest adjacent to the Song Be River contained a high level of Viet Cong activity. In addition, the Xom Cat area was known to be a major infiltration route into the famed War Zone "D".

Operation SIOUX CITY commenced with the brigade moving by road convoy northeast of Xom Cat, firing artillery in advance preparation. The movement was executed without enemy contact.

Upon establishment of the brigade command post, patrols from the 1st and 2d Battalions, 503d Infantry were issued to conduct search and destroy operations. Viet Cong were encountered on several occasions, yet contact continued to be brief with the enemy breaking almost immediately after firing.

As the brigade scoured the area north of Xom Cat, it uncovered numerous food, weapons and vehicular maintenance caches. The equipment found in the latter ranged from brake fluid and diesel fuel to truck tires, drive shaft yokes and clutch pressure plates. These discoveries indicated a major resupply effort was taking place in the area. The introduction of the 173d brought these efforts to a halt.

Operation SIOUX CITY terminated on 9 October with the brigade infantry elements being helilifted to Bien Hoa and D/16th Armor and E/17th Cavalry closing at base camp by road convoy.





ROBIN

10-17 October 1966

From 10 to 17 October the 1/503d Infantry with elements of 3/319th Artillery, D/16th Armor and E/17th Cavalry participated in a joint security operation from Phu My north to Bear Cat on Highway 15. The newly-arrived 3d Brigade, 4th Infantry Division was provided with a complete escort from Vung Tau, their landing point, to Bear Cat, where their base camp was to be established.

Eight hamlets or villages along the route were known to have VC committees, therefore making it imperative that utmost security be employed to insure the safety of the 3d Brigade. In addition, the 274th Main Force Regiment was believed to be operating in the

area.

The 1st Battalion and units under their operational control deployed by road convoy to Position HAWK approximately half-way between Bear Cat and Phu My on Route 15. From this point, patrols were introduced to protect the highway and its immediate environs. Upon the successful movement of the 3d Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, the 1st Battalion terminated Operation ROBIN.

The brigade suffered no losses in action during the operation; however, a Civic Action team was ambushed on 13 October resulting in four deaths. The two officers and enlisted men had been conducting Psychological Operations in the AO and were ambushed south of the Brigade CP while

in transit.





ATTLEBORO

7-20 November 1966

Operation ATTLEBORO was initiated in Tay Ninh Province.

On 7 November, the 173d alerted the 2/503d Infantry to deploy to the Area of Operation ATTLEBORO with E/17th Cavalry, D/16th Armor, the 173d Engineer Company, 3/319th Artillery and elements of Brigade Headquarters Company. The mission of the Airborne Task Force was to conduct surveillance of likely crossing sites along the Saigon River, destroying any enemy elements attempting to move east.

It was only a few hours after the warning order was issued that 2/503d Infantry and A/3/319th Artillery found themselves aboard C-130 and C-123 aircraft enroute to Minh Thanh in Tay Ninh Province.

The brigade secured each objective assigned as they screened the area of operation. Elements of the 2d Battalion encountered several base camps, bivouac and training sites.





WACO

25 November - 2 December 1966

When the brigade returns from the field after the termination of an operation, it immediately assumes responsibility for the Tactical Area of Responsibility (TAOR), the area surrounding the base camp at Bien Hoa. The area east of the TAOR was at this time arousing considerable interest since intelligence reports (supplied by E/17th Cav's LRRP teams) indicated that there were VC operating in the area. The enemy's ability to conduct small harassing attacks in the TAOR led to the deployment of the 1st Battalion, 503d Infantry with E/17th Cavalry and D/16th Armor (Task Force SUTTON), with supporting artillery from C/3/319th Artillery, into this area.

The suspicions of Viet Cong in the area were confirmed on 29 November when Company A of the 1st Battalion located a VC base camp capable of accommodating 300 persons. On the same day Bravo and Charlie Companies also discovered base installations.

WINCHESTER

8 October - 4 December 1966

The 4/503d Infantry's mission during Operation WINCHESTER was to relieve the 2d Battalion of the 26th Marine (Composite) Division and to occupy and maintain control of an assigned sector of the Da Nang TAOR.

Throughout the 58 day period of Operation WINCHESTER the paratroopers conducted numerous day and night patrols in addition to providing security for the daily convoys of troops and supplies moving through the I Corps Tactical Zone.





CANARY DUCK

7 December 1966 - 5 January 1967

Operation CANARY/DUCK, a two phase highway security operation, was executed astride Highway 15 from Phu My to Long Binh and from Phu My to Bear Cat, with the 173d providing escort for the 199th Light Infantry Brigade and 9th Infantry Division. These units were moving north from Vung Tau to their respective staging areas.

On 7 December the paratroopers of the 173d deployed to the Area of Operation CANARY with the 2d Squadron of the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment under Brigade

Operational Control.

Throughout the operation, brigade elements moved up and down the convoy route checking out water crossings and possible ambush sites and insuring that the enemy was not given the opportunity to hamper the movement of incoming convoys.

The second phase of the operation, codenamed DUCK, was initiated as the final elements of the 199th Light Infantry Brigade

had cleared the AO.

Brigade elements met with little contact during the month of December; however, through a series of brief contacts, 30 of the enemy fell by body count with an estimated 25 possible dead. Perhaps the most significant factor of the operation was the new offensive techniques employed. Troop "E", 17th Cavalry applied the Aero Cavalry concept for the first time during this operation—a technique that was to prove itself in subsequent search and destroy operations.

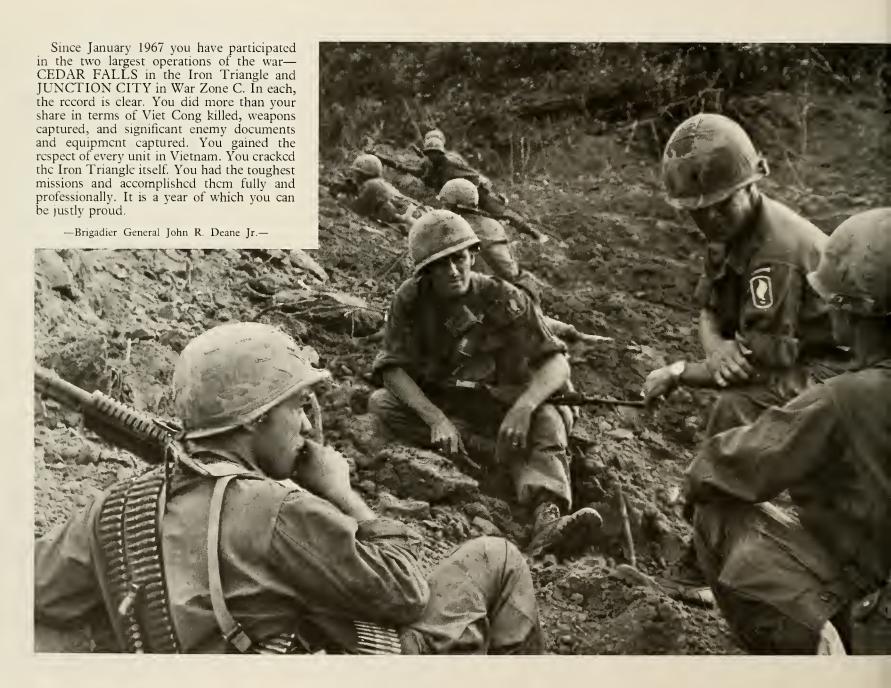
On 5 January 1967 Operation CANARY/ DUCK terminated successfully with the 9th Infantry Division safely closing into their

staging area at Bear Cat.









CEDAR FALLS

5-25 January 1967

The Iron Triangle was named in early 1963 by Associated Press writer Peter Arnett, a veteran news correspondent, who noticed a basic similarity in enemy concentration between this area and the Iron Triangle in the Korean conflict. The area had been a Viet Cong stronghold as far back as 1950 with its well-fortified tunnel and bunker systems.

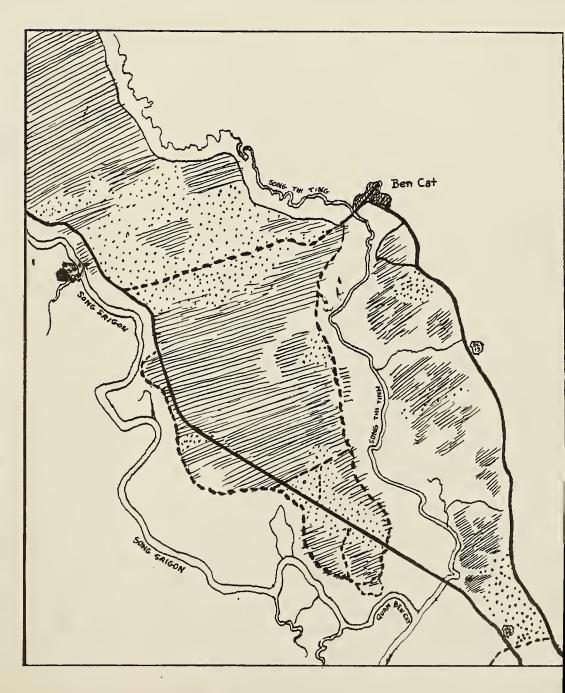
On 5 January 1967 the 1/503d Infantry moved to the Cau Dinh jungle at the southern tip of the Iron Triangle to kick off a new and dynamic type of search and destroy

operation.

The strategy of the main operation, CEDAR FALLS, was to seal off the entire area, penetrate and saturate the area, and destroy all enemy forces and installations.

With most of the other units occupying blocking positions, the 173d's three infantry battalions swept and cleared the trianglelocating and destroying small troop concentrations and tunnel systems. Many VC elected to seek refuge in the vast underground complexes, but the 51st Chemical Detachment, 173d Engineer Company, as well as infantry volunteer "tunnel rat" teams, fearlessly explored the VC tunnels, bringing out large caches of weapons and supplies and VC captives. The combined effort resulted in over 1,000 tons of rice and 200 crew-served and individual weapons captured. Sixty-five enemy were taken prisoner of war; many were routed out of the extensive tunnel and bunker systems.

The 173d left 185 enemy dead in the rice paddies and jungle of the triangle—"E" Troop of the 17th Cavalry alone accounted for 73 VC killed in action.











BIG SPRING

30 January - 16 February 1967

On 30 January, "E" Troop, 17th Cavalry deployed once again to the infamous War Zone "D", spearheading Operation BIG SPRING. On 1 February, the 1st, 2d, and 4th Battalions of the 503d Infantry with the 1st Brigade, 9th Infantry Division and supporting artillery, deployed by helicopter and road convoy into the Area of Operation BIG SPRING, west of the Song Be River, 14 miles northeast of Bien Hoa.

Throughout the operation brigade elements made numerous contacts with the enemy, to include the period of the Tet

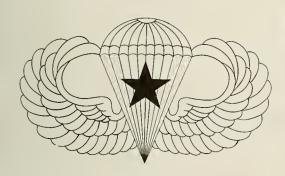
(Lunar New Year) Truce.

Twenty-six base camps were discovered in "D" Zone, and enemy troops were often encountered during the search of these camps. Brigade elements located and destroyed over 1,000 bunkers, 78 huts, more than 24 tons of rice and 24 weapons. Brigade ground units with air support accounted for 79 Viet Cong dead.









JUNCTION CITY

22 February 1967-

On 22 February 1967 the 2 503d Infantry Task Force spearheaded Operation JUNC-TION CITY by jumping into combat deep in War Zone "C" near the Cambodian border. It was the first American combat jump in Vietnam, and the first since Korea.

The 1st and 4th Battalions came into adjacent landing zones by airmobile assault. Once again the 173d was chosen to lead the way—this time on the biggest Allied offensive to date in Vietnam.

Operation JUNCTION CITY's objective was to locate and destroy the Central Office South Vietnam (COSVN), the supreme headquarters of the Viet Cong in the Republic of Vietnam.

The accomplishments of Phase I of Operation JUNCTION CITY were significant: 266 VC killed by body count, 32 possible kills, and 4 captured. The complete destruction of the COSVN Public Information Office for Psychological Propaganda and a COSVN Signal site dealt a heavy blow to the enemy propaganda effort.

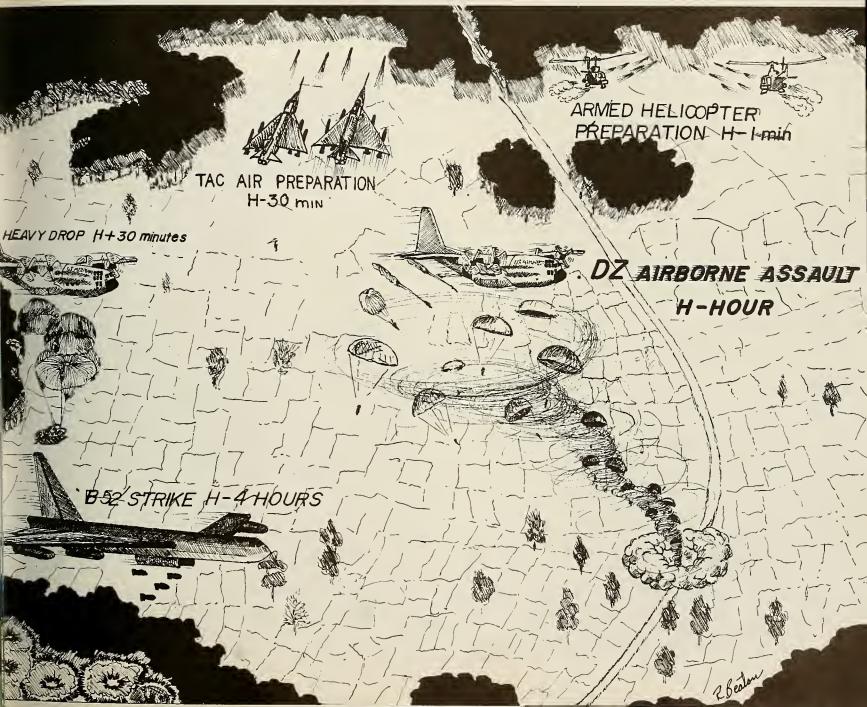














FIRST COMBAT JUMP IN 15 YEARS

The jumpmaster's voice rose above the roar of the C-130 aircraft—STAND IN THE DOOR. Brigadier General John R. Deane Jr., the 173d Airborne Brigade Commander, shuffled into the right door as Lieutenant Colonel Robert H. Sigholtz, the 2nd Battalion, 503d Infantry Commander, took his position in the left door.

Paratroopers in the lead plane leaned forward, ready for the final jump command. The green light flashed on—GO. The commanders jumped, leading their men on the first American parachute assault in Vietnam.

A 780 man task force hit the silk along the northern edge of War Zone C near the Cambodian border. Below lay drop zone "Charlie," 1000 by 6000 ft. of dried paddy land, deep in enemy-controlled territory.

The paratroopers received only light sniper fire as they descended 1000 ft. to the huge clearing. Within 10 minutes, the 173d "We Try Harder" battalion had been dropped into the heart of the Viet Cong jungle stronghold. The element of surprise had been fully realized.

Speed now became paramount. Each man hit the ground, grabbed his weapon and combat gear, and headed for his assembly area. As the paratroopers moved out to the woodline they met little enemy resistance. "A" company made contact immediately and silenced the Viet Cong probe.

The C-130's raced into the drop zone again, this time unloading mortars, howitzers, and ammunition. Mortar and artillery crews raced to their heavy weapons and readied them for firing.

Later, the versatile Air Force Hercules returned at low level, slingshotting vital supplies to the troops below. It was the first time in history the low altitude Cargo Delivery System had been used in combat.

Within an hour an infantry battalion, with artillery, control and support teams, was ready for full scale combat. The jump was a success.

The first part of their mission was complete: with lightning speed the airborne task force had jumped into combat, blocking the VC from the refuge of the Cambodian border. They were now to patrol the area in search of hard-core enemy forces. The job had just begun.

First Parachute Strike Launches Biggest U.S. Offensive of War THE LOUISVILLE TIMES U.S. Paratroops Make 1st Combat Jump

73d's Combat Jump

45,000 Gls Open

Biggest War Push

Mighty 45,000-Man

Army Goes Into Fight

First In 15 Years

World Journal Tribi The Evening Star

45,000 GIs ATTACK CONG

U.S. Launches Biggest Drive

Near Cambodia in War's Biggest Action

PARATROOPERS DROP INTO VC STRONGHOLD

STARWAND SERIPES

Paratroops Jump



The Salt Lake Tribunc

Paradrop Leads Off

U.S. Paratroops Open War's Biggest Drive U.S. Troops, Jets Zone C Assaul Is led By first

Open Biggest Assault of War

45,000 Soldiers Join For 250-Mile Attack

EVENING SUN 55T PARATROOPERS LEAL

GIs Open Viet 145,000 U.S. Troops Open BIGGEST U.S. ATTACK

Pittsburgh Post-Gazetteather



COMBAT: THE WAR



The 173d Leaves Its Mark

The men of the 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate) are proud to have spearheaded the U. S. Army combat effort in Vietnam. Since its arrival on 5 May 1965, the brigade has established an outstanding combat record. The Sky Soliders have left their mark throughout the land.

War Zone "D", a long-time Viet Cong sanctuary, has become a second home to the brigade. Just north of the 173d base camp . at Bien Hoa, "D" Zone has been hit often

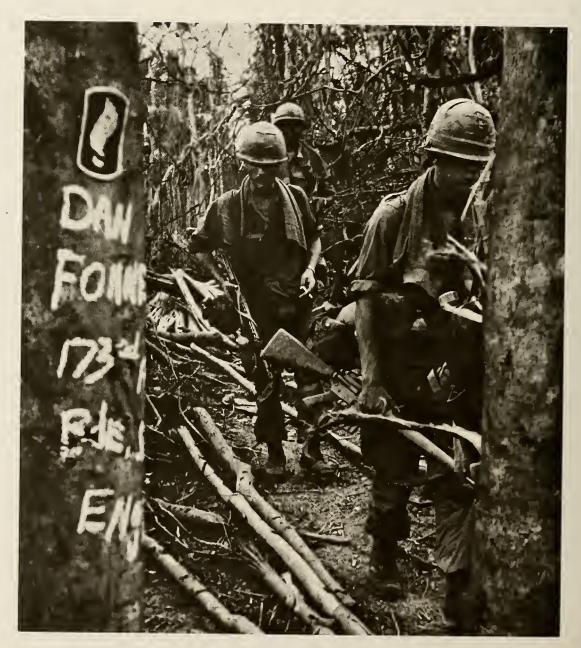
and hard by the paratroopers.

War Zone "C" has also felt the might of the 173d. On 22 February 1967 the Sky Soldiers made the first American combat jump of the war to kick off Operation JUNC-TION CITY. Deep in "C" Zone, the initial assault met only light resistance—indicative of the respect the paratroopers have won from the enemy.

The 173d veterans cracked the infamous Iron Triangle. Leading the attack in Operation CEDAR FALLS, the Sky Soldiers swept and cleared the once impenetrable enemy stronghold, destroying many base

camps and tunnel systems.

Combat successes such as these keep the Viet Cong on the run. If "Charlie" chooses to stand and fight, he must face the firepower and mobility of the 173d. The enemy has learned to fear the man who wears a red bayonet borne by a white wing on his shoulder.





AIRMOBILE ASSAULT

The helicopter is the key to mobility in Vietnam. In one massive, well-coordinated troop lift; an entire infantry battalion can be transported into an objective area in less than an hour.

The UH-1D troop-carriers, known as "Hueys," roar into the pick-up zone (PZ) in a series of waves. Heavily-laden paratroopers scramble onto the "slickships" and the lift is underway in a matter of seconds.

The ride ends abruptly as the choppers dive for the landing zone (LZ). As the Hueys touch down, the paratroopers leap from the choppers and head for cover. If the LZ is "hot" the men assault the woodline. The infantrymen move out to their objective and the helicopters return to the PZ for another lift.









The Vietnam War can be summarized in two words: Search and Destroy. The enemy must be tracked down and fixed before he can be taken under fire and finished. This is the nature of counter-guerrilla warfare in which the enemy tries to evade and hide.

It takes all-out concentration—from the commanding general to the individual rifleman—to find the elusive enemy. Tactical developments such as the use of scout dogs and sighting devices are tailored towards pinpointing the Viet Cong. Cavalry and reconnaissance-type operations are used extensively due to the cover afforded by the dense jungle terrain.

Once the enemy has been located, contact must be maintained in order to destroy him and his materiel. The ground troops put the pressure on and artillery and air power are used to keep the VC pinned down.

To the infantryman falls the mission of of closing with and destroying the enemy. He must force the attack, assaulting the VC and routing him from his positions. Finally, the days and days of pounding the jungle have paid off in contact with the enemy.

But many times the enemy chooses not to stand and fight—he picks up what he can find and fades into the all-encompassing jungle. He leaves behind what he cannot carry on his back.

Bunkers, tunnel systems and rice caches serve as the VC life line. When he deserts, rather than defends these base camps against the oncoming praatroopers, he loses his operations and supply center. The 173d leaves nothing behind for the retreating enemy to find if he chooses to return.



SEARCH AND DESTROY

















TUNNELS

The "tunnel rat" is a rare breed. Armed with only a pistol, flashlight and gasmask, he explores Viet Cong tunnel complexes. Snakes, scorpions, booby traps and "Charlie" himself lurk around every corner. And yet infantrymen volunteer to go down into the tunnels before the 173d Engineer Company tunnel rat teams arrive.

During Operation CEDAR FALLS in the Iron Triangle, 173d troopers discovered, searched, and destroyed dozens of intricate tunnel complexes. One tunnel ran for over a mile on at least four different levels. The paratroopers' effort resulted in the capture of huge amounts of enemy supplies and a number of prisoners of war taken from the extensive tunnel systems.





















COMBAT













FIREFIGHT

This is the story of a firefight. It is the story of the infantry—the individual soldier and the team.

Each man is on his own. He must react quickly and function effectively. There is no time for hesitation, no room for mistakes. He must know what to do and how to do it—and most important, he must face the test of combat.

Yet the trooper must be able to work with and depend on his fellow soldier. He must fight as part of an interdependent team.

For days, the infantryman searches the jungle in pursuit of a tough and elusive enemy. Once contact is made, it is his job to close with and destroy the enemy. It is a demanding task.

This firefight involved Bravo Company, 4th Battalion during Operation JUNCTION CITY. But it could have been any of the brigade's line companies in any operation. It is the story of the Sky Soldier under fire.

















DUST OFF

No one knows how many lives Dust Off (Medical Evacuation Helicopter) has saved. The soldier knows, however, that if he is wounded a Dust Off chopper will be there within a matter of minutes to carry him to safety.

The dustoff crew receives the call and is on the way immediately: Trained combat medics give first aid, often risking their lives to reach the wounded. "Doc," as the medic is called by his fellow soldiers, is always there when the going gets tough. He is the initial life-saver.

If there is a landing zone nearby the Dust Off ship comes in, sits down for a second and carries the wounded man out of the battle area. When there is no place to touch down, the chopper hovers above the trees and lifts the wounded out by a special harness.











CHAPLAINS

The chaplains of the 173d Airborne Brigade are omnipresent; they have conducted services in thick jungle and open rice paddies. Whenever possible the chaplains accompany the infantry in the field. They bring needed religious guidance to the men who face death daily. They have served under fire, aiding the wounded both physically and spiritually. Somehow the chaplains find the time for a moment of silence and prayer in a war that can be very real—anywhere, anytime.









FIRE SUPPORT

Extensive ground and air fire support is available to the maneuver elements of the brigade on a close and continuous basis. The Fire Support Coordination Center (FSCC) controls and directs the delivery of supporting fire. With close coordination in the Tactical Operations Center (TOC), it is possible for an infantry battalion in contact with the enemy to receive both ground and aerial fire support in the same area at the same time.

Ground fire support ranges from the handheld 60mm mortar to the 105mm howitzers of the 3 319th Artillery and higher. The infantry company commander has his own "hip-pocket" artillery in the 81mm mortar, while the battalion commander relies on the

heavier 4.2" (four-deuce) mortar.

3/319th artillerymen fire the accurate 105mm howitzer in direct support of the brigade infantry battalions. An artillery forward observer moves with each infantry company and requests fires through the Fire Direction Center (FDC) located at the Fire Support Base (FSB).

Aerial fire support ranges from Army helicopters to Air Force tactical bombers and higher. Armed UH-1B helicopters, known as gunships, provide extremely close and devastating firepower. The "gunnys" fire a 40mm grenade launcher, M-60 machine

guns and 2.75" rockets.

Tactical air power is coordinated by a Forward Air Controller (FAC) who flys an 01-E Bird Dog observation plane. Fighter-bombers, such as the F-100 Supersabre, deliver everything from cannon fire to 1000 pound bombs on both a pre-planned and immediate basis. The ultimate in air power is the B-52 Stratofortress.







MORTARS

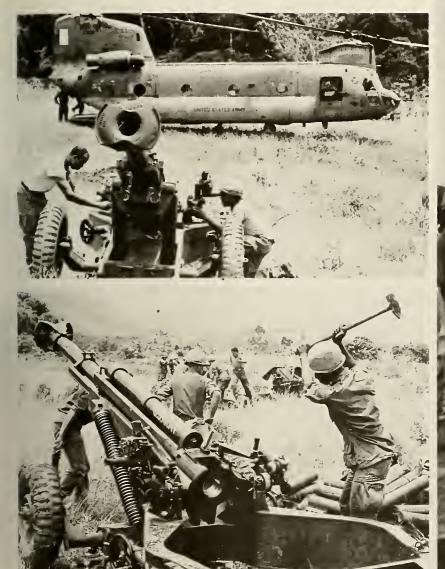








ARTILLERY







GUNSHIPS

TAC AIR













COMBAT SUPPORT

The 173d Support Battalion keeps the supplies coming to the brigade's maneuver elements. Everything from ammunition, gas and spare parts to "C"-rations, fresh food and mail is delivered to the troops on a daily basis.

The Brigade Supply Operations Center (BSOC) in the rear area at Bien Hoa breaks down and loads the supplies onto helicopters, fixed-wing aircraft or trucks. The BSOC in the forward area receives the items and distributes them to subordinate units in the field. The forward resupply area controls the supply and maintenance in support of the combat elements.

Versatile UH-1D helicopters transport supplies to the line units at least twice daily during an operation. Whenever possible the Hueys deliver a hot breakfast and evening meal to the infantry companies. The paratroopers rely on "C"-rations and GI ingenuity for the noon meal.

The CH-47 Chinook helicopter is the real workhorse of the supply system. These huge aircraft can carry howitzers and sling-loaded ammunition in large quantities, as well as all kinds of other supplies.

During a large operation C-130 Hercules and other fixed-wing aircraft can be seen taking off from Bien Hoa Airbase at fifteen second intervals loaded with supplies. If an airstrip is available Air Force planes can carry a tremendous amount of goods to the brigade forward base camp in a very short time.

The men of "C" Company (Supply and Transportation) have the job of delivering items by road convoy. It is a dangerous but vital aspect of the vast supply system employed by the 173d.















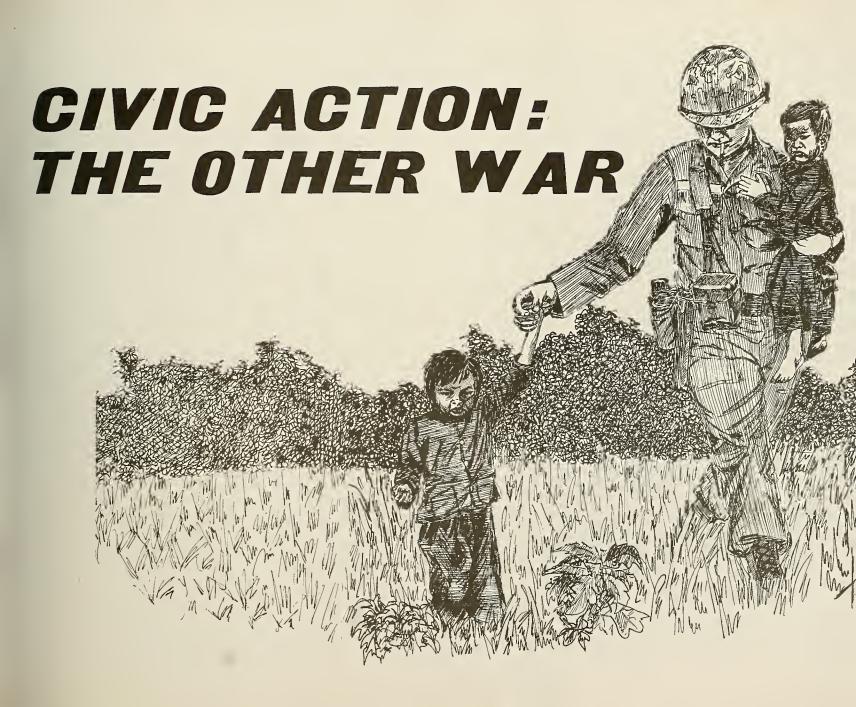












Combat and Civic Action represent the dual nature of the war in Vietnam. In many cases they are closely related: rice captured from the Viet Cong is distributed to refugees; ammunition boxes are given to needy Vietnamese for building. Victory in combat is only half the battle—the loyalty of the Vietnamese people to their government must be cultivated and maintained. With this goal in mind, the 173d has developed an extensive Civic Action program designed to help the Vietnamese to help themselves.

The Brigade S5 (Civic Action) section is responsible for all civil affairs activities. At base camp, rear clements conduct long range programs including medical aid, building and teaching. In the forward (operational) areas, Civic Action teams run programs of short duration and high impact, consisting primarily of medical aid and distribution of

foodstuffs.

Medical and Dental Civic Action Programs (MEDCAP and DENTCAP) constitute the basis of a great deal of the brigade's assistance programs. Doctors, dentists and medics treat patients and distribute soap and medical supplies to the needy villages. Food and clothing are also given out in the effort to improve health and sanitation standards.

Building and teaching are important aspects of the 173d Civic Action program. Schools, classrooms and dispensaries, as well as roads and bridges, are constructed—often as a joint American-Vietnamese project. Troopers teach English to Vietnamese adults and children, thus promoting the education and understanding necessary to winning the "other war" in Vietnam.



























PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS

The purpose of psychological operations is two-fold: to inform the Vietnamese people

and to destroy Viet Cong morale.

Jeeps mounted with loudspeakers often accompany MEDCAP teams into villages where they broadcast a message of health and peace. The teams use music and movies to both entertain and educate the war-weary villagers. They also distribute magazines and posters explaining the accomplishments and goals of the government.

Airborne leaflet missions are flown over operational areas in an effort to eonvinee the enemy that there is no hope for victory. Isolated guerrillas thus learn of the far-

reaching power of the Allied forces.

The results of psychological operations are often impressive. During Operation CEDAR FALLS, 72 Viet Cong rallied to the government eause due to effective use of speaker and leaflet missions. Two brothers who gave themselves up to 173d troopers under the Chieu Hoi (Open Arms) amnesty program were responsible for the return of many VC to the government side.

The two Hoi Chanh (returnees) pointed out enemy hiding places and staging areas. Their broadeast messages encouraged former comrades to give up the fight. The message was also reproduced on a leaflet and distributed by air to the enemy's jungle hideouts.

In one day, over thirty VC received the word and decided to cease their aggression

and join the Allied effort.







THE PEOPLE

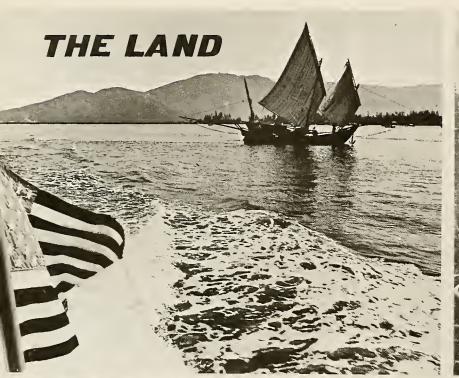






















WELCOME HOME SKY SOLDIER



The 173d Sky Soldier spends his year in Vietnam in the field. But every now and then, between combat operations, the trooper returns to base camp at Bien Hoa for a short break.

The paratrooper returns to the rear area by helicopter or convoy for a few days of "in-country" rest and relaxation. He may be greeted by a Red Cross girl with a cup of coffee, a kind word and a large sign which reads "WELCOME HOME SKY SOL-DIER."

If he's lucky, there may be a USO show. The singing and dancing of shapely females always meets with a warm response. The men still talk about Playmate Jo Collins' visit to the brigade in January 1966.

It's always good to be back after a month or more in the jungle. The flares and guard towers are a constant reminder of the job that has to be done and the trooper knows that tomorrow or the next day he'll get the word to move out.

The most important base camp activity is training. All new arrivals attend an intensive one-week course at the Jungle School. Here, the Sky Soldier learns Viet Cong actions and Brigade tactics gained from experience. He is then ready to take to the field—confident in his ability to defeat the enemy.





JUNGLE SCHOOL







GI JO COLLINS











USO SHOWS























THE ENEMY



The Viet Cong is a tough, clusive and unpredictable enemy. One day he fights fanatically—the next he breaks and runs.

VC tactics are basically those of the gucrrilla: when the enemy attacks, retreat; when the enemy withdraws, attack; when the enemy is static, harass. He is reluctant to stand and fight with a heavily-armed American unit such as the 173d.

Counter-ambush techniques developed by the Allied forces have reduced the effectiveness of the favorite VC tactic—the ambush to a minimum. The enemy is thus forced to rely on terrorist activities and human wave attacks on isolated outposts for his few "victorics."

As more and more former VC sanctuaries such as the Iron Triangle are overrun, "Charlie" loses his bases of operation. As a result, he is always on the move, looking for supplies and hiding from the large-scale Allied operations. But he cannot evade forever, and the pressure is taking a heavy toll.















The Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN) is the supreme headquarters of the Hanoi-directed "National Liberation Front" in South Vietnam, COSVN thus controls and coordinates all Viet Cong activity in the Republic of Vietnam.

During Operation JUNCTION CITY paratroopers of the 4th Battalion, 503d Infantry, located and overran the COSVN Public Information Office for Psychological Propaganda. In one day, the 173d dealt a heavy blow to the enemy propaganda machine and uncovered a great deal of valuable information.

The two pictures at the start of "THE ENEMY" and on these two pages, were captured from the COSVN Public Information Office. They show a strong emphasis on training, rallies and destruction: key aspects of the Viet Cong propaganda effort.

























THE SKY SOLDIER



THE PRIDE OF THE PARATROOPER

The Sky Soldier is the man behind the 173d's great combat record. He is the key to victory in the many small-scale encounters that make up the war in Vietnam.

Many troopers come to Vietnam straight from their fifth and qualifying jump at Airborne School. They have trained hard and have proven themselves as paratroopers—they are eager to prove themselves in combat against the Viet Cong.

The trooper learns fast in the jungle and

The trooper learns fast in the jungle and rice paddies of Vietnam: he pulls point on a day patrol and he stands outpost guard on a night ambush. He becomes hardened to the rain and mud and endures the broiling

sun.

In combat, the Sky Soldier reacts with determination. He faces the enemy in close combat and learns to respect him. But as a paratrooper he knows no fear and will not quit until he has defeated that enemy. His fighting spirit allows only victory—and he is willing to pay the price.

willing to pay the price.

Above all, it is the pride of the paratrooper that makes him a better soldier and a better fighter. The same determination that makes him jump from an airplane also makes him drive on in a fierce firefight. The 173d trooper wears the red bayonet borne on a white wing proudly—he has earned the name "Sky Soldier."









































After six months on line with the 1st Battalion, Specialist 4 Douglas C. Holland came to the Brigade Information Office. As a photo-journalist, his job was to cover the men of the brigade in action. He liked his work—it gave him a chance to photograph and write of the men with whom he had fought as an infantryman.

On Sunday, April 9, 1967, Holland was killed in action on a heliborne assault. He took pictures until the firefight became intense and then began helping the wounded. His last picture is shown below.

Doug Holland died a hero—under fire aiding a fellow paratrooper.









THE CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR

Since the 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate) arrived in Vietnam in May 1965 there have been many acts of heroism. Most are accomplished in the normal line of duty. But a handful of Sky Soldiers have won the recognition of their fellow soldiers, the United States Army and their country.

Three 173d paratroopers have won the Congressional Medal of Honor for gallantry in action above and beyond the call of duty.

On 20 September 1965, Sergeant Larry Pierce saved the lives of three members of his squad by diving upon a claymore mine. In February 1966, Sergeant Pierce was posthumously awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for his action.

On 22 October 1965, Private First Class Milton Olive threw himself onto a grenade, saving the lives of four of his fellow soldiers. PFC Olive was posthumously awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor in April 1966.

President Johnson presented the Congressional Medal of Honor to Specialist 6 Larry Joel in December 1966 for saving the lives of a dozen wounded paratroopers. Specialist Joel, although seriously wounded twice and unable to walk, crawled through a day-long battle, risking his life to save others.

The sacrifices made by these three men typify the determination and fighting spirit of the Sky Soldier. Their accomplishments have set a standard for those who carry on the fight.



Private First Class Milton Olive



Specialist 6 Larry Joel











