

173D AIRBORNE BRIGADE



A PICTORIAL HISTORY





Dak To's Sky Soldiers

"On Hill 875, in the jungled mountains of South Vietnam, American paratroopers have written another chapter in their illustrious history.

Fighting in savage, close-quarter combat for the heights dominating the Dak To military complex, they have shown once again that their driving professionalism makes them second to none among military forces of the world.

American paratroopers made their combat debut in World War II in grim engagements in Sicily, Normandy, Holland and the Pacific Theater. They fought again in Korea and have now distinguished themselves in Vietnam.

They bear with pride their ability to leap into battle from the skies,

a quality that accentuates their superb capabilities as infantrymen and armored troopers on the ground.

In South Vietnam are units of the 101st Airborne Division and the 173d Airborne Brigade. It is to the latter, one of the first American combat units committed in Vietnam, that the task of retaining mastery of the Dak To area has fallen. The 173d, a rugged outfit indeed, has suffered grievously in carrying out this mission, and it deserves the nation's gratitude.

The proud paratroopers, elite of the United States Army, comprise the finest of our youth. Their sacrifice epitomizes the burning emphasis of the American commitment in South Vietnam."

Introduction

When the 173d Airborne Brigade arrived in Vietnam in May of 1965, they brought with them the inherited tradition of the 503d Parachute Infantry that jumped into combat on Corregidor in 1944. During the first three years in Vietnam, the Brigade has written a history of world-wide fame and played a major role in the South Vietnamese struggle for freedom from Communist aggression.

The Brigade, organized in June of 1963 from the 2nd Airborne Battle Group, 503d Infantry, underwent extensive airborne, guerrilla, and jungle warfare training on its home island, Okinawa, and throughout the Asian Theatre prior to coming to Vietnam. Since that time, the Sky Soldiers have established an unparalleled record of firsts in the Vietnam Conflict. Being the

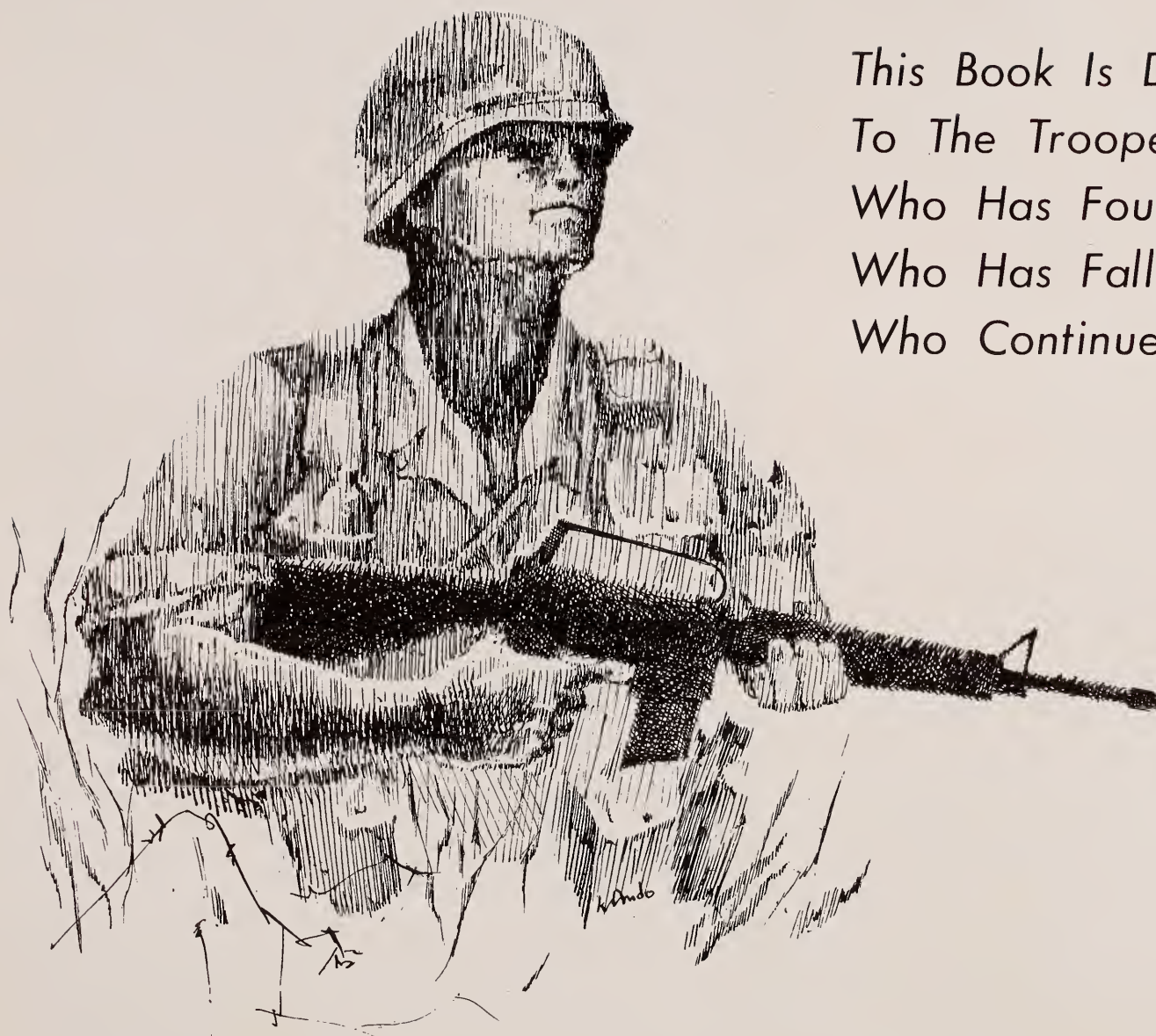
first Army ground combat unit to arrive in Vietnam, the 173d spearheaded operations in the Iron Triangle, War Zones C and D, the Delta, and the Highlands. The Brigade was also first to conduct a joint American-Vietnamese operation.

One mission never to be forgotten was the first combat parachute assault since the Korean Conflict to spearhead Operation JUNCTION CITY.

Profiting by their experience in the III Corps area with the Viet Cong, the combat seasoned Brigade moved to the Central Highlands to answer the threat of a Communist buildup. Again the 173d distinguished itself in close-quarter fighting against the North Vietnamese Regulars who are better organized, trained, and equipped than their southern counterparts.

The 173d Brigade won't take time to stand on its laurels. Sky Soldiers will continue to drive on as they did in VIETNAM, THE THIRD YEAR.





*This Book Is Dedicated
To The Trooper
Who Has Fought
Who Has Fallen
Who Continues To Fight*



VIETNAM THE THIRD YEAR

173d Airborne Brigade A Pictorial History

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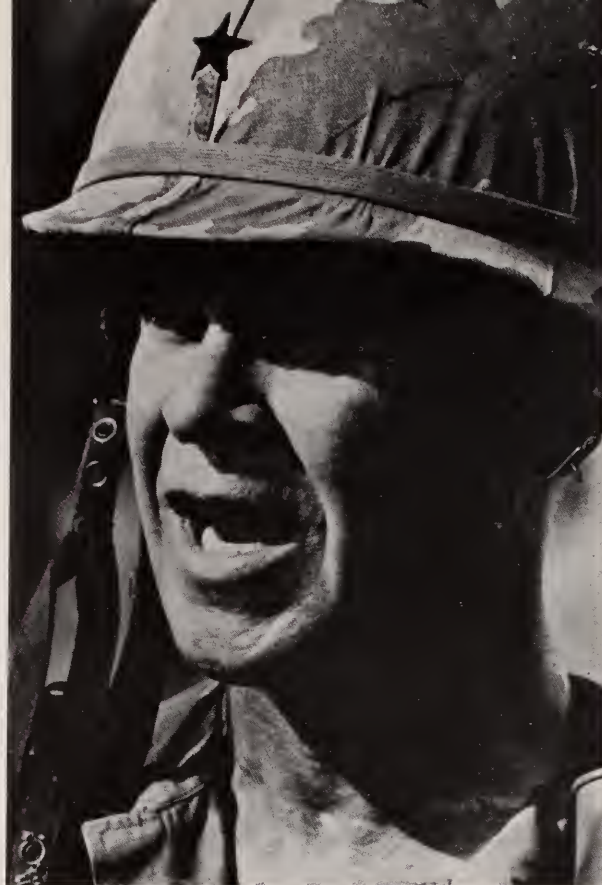
Paratroopers :

My last months with the 173d Airborne Brigade were climaxed by your rapid response to General Westmoreland's directive to move to the Central Highlands and eliminate the growing threat in that area. In the area around Dak To from Kontum City to Dak Pek, you engaged and defeated four NVA Regiments thus destroying the enemy plan for a major monsoon offensive. As I departed in August 1967, General Westmoreland praised your performance. He told me that your rapid movement to meet each threat, your aggressive attacks on a well-trained enemy, your professional approach to combat, and your Airborne spirit had saved the Highlands.

I now read in the press and official reports of your continued success. My pride in being able to say "I was a Sky Soldier" is tremendous.

Good luck, good hunting, and God bless you.

AIRBORNE—ALL THE WAY
Major General John R. Deane, Jr.



Brigadier General John R. Deane Jr., former commander of the 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate), has been reassigned to the office of the Assistant Chief of Staff for Force Development in Washington, D.C.

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 lieutenant 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.

General Deane arrived in Vietnam February 5, 1966, and assumed duties as Deputy Commanding General and Chief of Staff I Field Force. In July of that year, General Deane was assigned as Assistant Division Commander, 1st Infantry Division. During Operation ATTLEBORO, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, this nation's second highest medal for gallantry.

On December 28, 1966, General Deane assumed command of the 173d Airborne Brigade. Since that time, he has led the Sky Soldiers on combat operations in the Iron Triangle, War Zones C and D, and the Central Highlands. General Deane jumped into combat, leading the first American parachute assault in Vietnam during Operation JUNCTION CITY near the Cambodian border.

Since commanding the 173d Airborne Brigade, General Deane has been promoted to Major General.

Sky Soldiers :

Once again the 173d Airborne Brigade finds itself in the forefront of the struggle for freedom. This year as in the past, the 173d has proven itself as a fighting force. It is also fitting that during the past three years the Brigade has fought shoulder to shoulder with the Free World Forces on behalf of the people of the Republic of Vietnam.

As in each war and in each battle, the true story of the Brigade lies with the individual soldier—his heroism and his indomitable spirit. He is the man who undergoes innumerable hardships and suffering to lessen the trials of others.

It is the purpose of this book to show, by pictures and words, the life and accomplishments of the officers and men of the finest airborne unit of the United States Army. It is my hope that this account of the 173d's magnificent contribution towards the victory that will come will be meaningful and significant for each soldier of the Brigade.

Brigadier General Leo H. Schweiter

Brigadier General L.H. Schweiter came to the 173d Airborne Brigade with a great deal of combat experience. General Schweiter served with the 101st Airborne Division in World War II, and X Corps and the 7th Infantry Division in Korea.

During World War II, General Schweiter made combat jumps behind enemy lines into Normandy and Holland. In the European Theatre of Operations, he served with the 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment and the 101st's Intelligence (G-2) section.

In Korea, General Schweiter participated in the amphibious landings at the Inchon and Wonson, and the subsequent withdrawal from the Hamhung-Hungnam perimeter in North Korea. He later commanded the 32nd Infantry Regiment of the 7th Division in combat.



General Schweiter commanded the Provisional Reconnaissance Troop Sky Cavalry the first air cavalry unit in the U.S. Army. He also commanded the 2nd Airborne Battle Group, 504th Infantry, 82nd Airborne Division. In 1961, General Schweiter became the first commander of the Fifth Special Forces Group (Airborne).

He came to the 173d from an assignment as Assistant Division Commander of the 101st Airborne Division at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. While in command, the Sky Soldiers fought and won the Battle of Dak To and carried out many other missions throughout the Central Highlands.

His decorations include the Silver Star with Oak Leaf Cluster, the Combat Infantryman's Badge with Star, the Bronze Star with Three Oak Leaf Clusters, the Legion of Merit, the Distinguished Flying Cross for Heroism, the Air Medal (6th Oak Leaf Cluster) with "V" devices for heroism, the Purple Heart with one Oakleaf Cluster, and the Master Parachutist Badge.

Men of the

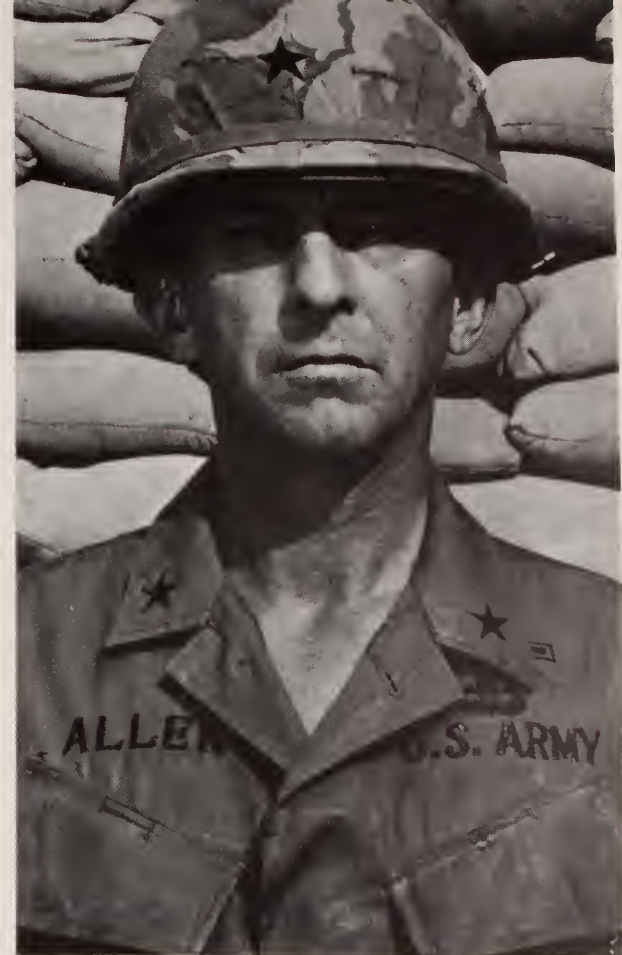
173d Airborne Brigade :

The 173d Airborne Brigade is one of the finest fighting units ever fielded by the Army. As the first U.S. Army ground combat unit committed in Vietnam, the Brigade has distinguished itself in combat and has played a decisive role in preventing the enemy from accomplishing his mission.

I am extremely proud to command this unit and am confident that it will continue to defeat and demoralize the enemy.

This book is yours—dedicated to you—the fighting soldier—and to those who have fought bravely and lost their lives. It is a pictorial history of the Third Year of the Sky Soldiers in Vietnam.

Brigadier General Richard J. Allen



Brigadier General Richard J. Allen assumed command of the 173d Airborne Brigade on March 20, 1968 after serving as assistant division commander of the 101st Airborne Division.

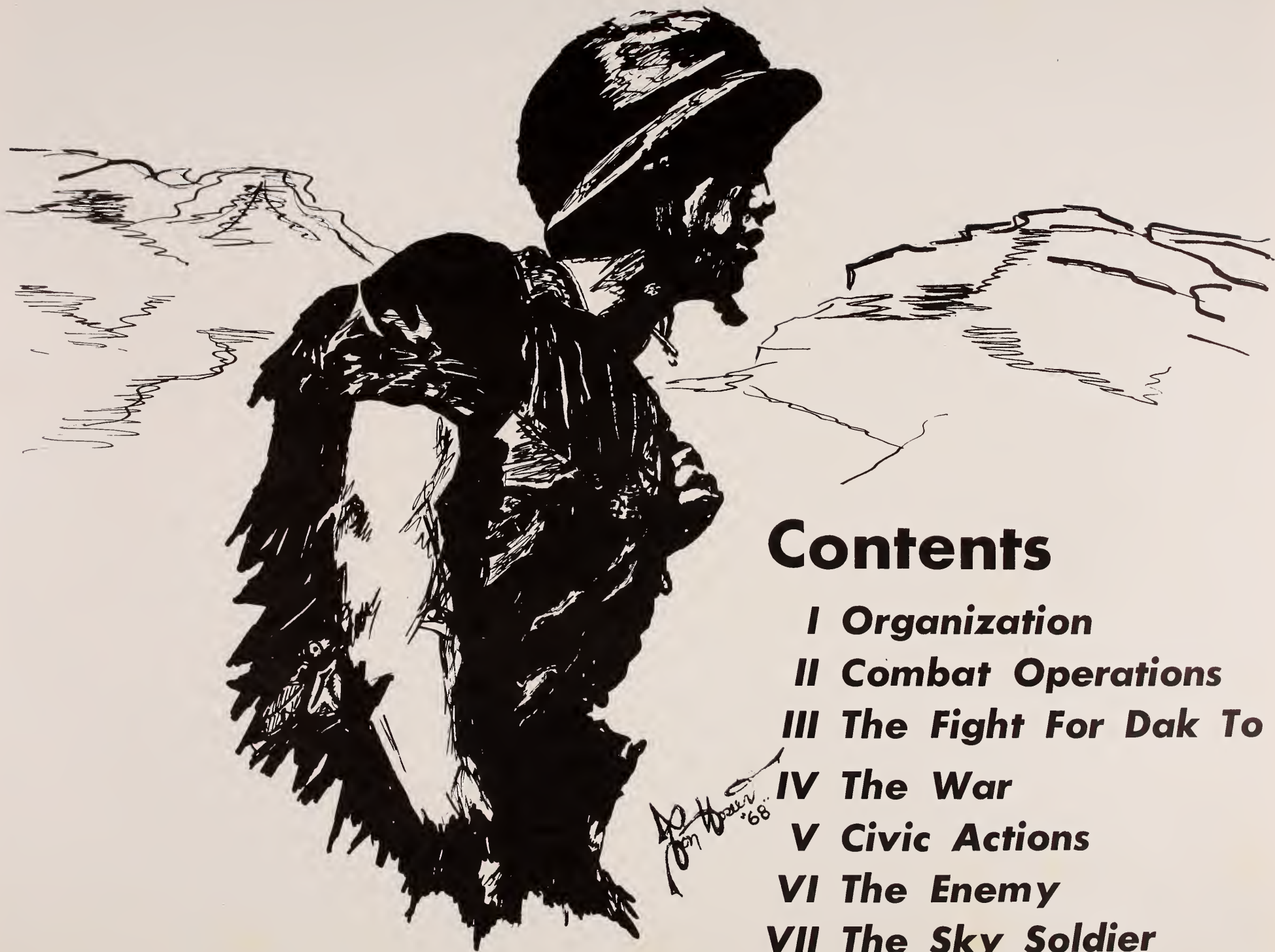
Enlisting in the Army in 1940, General Allen served in the grades of private, corporal, sergeant, and first sergeant until February, 1942, when he attended Infantry OCS at Fort Benning, Ga. He graduated as a second lieutenant.

During World War II, he participated in all of the campaigns of the 101st Airborne Division including the invasion of Normandy, the invasion of Holland, and the Battle of Bastogne.

A graduate of the Georgia Military Academy and the University of Maryland, General Allen has completed the following military schools: Infantry OCS, Parachute School, Armor Advanced Course, Command and General Staff College, Armed Forces Staff College, and Air War College.

His decorations include the Silver Star, the Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star, the Combat Infantryman Badge, the Distinguished Unit Citation (One Oak Leaf Cluster), the Army Commendation Medal, the Croix de Guerre with Bronze Star (France), the Croix de Guerre (Unit Fourregere-Belgium), the Netherlands Fourregere (Unit), and the Master Parachutist Badge.





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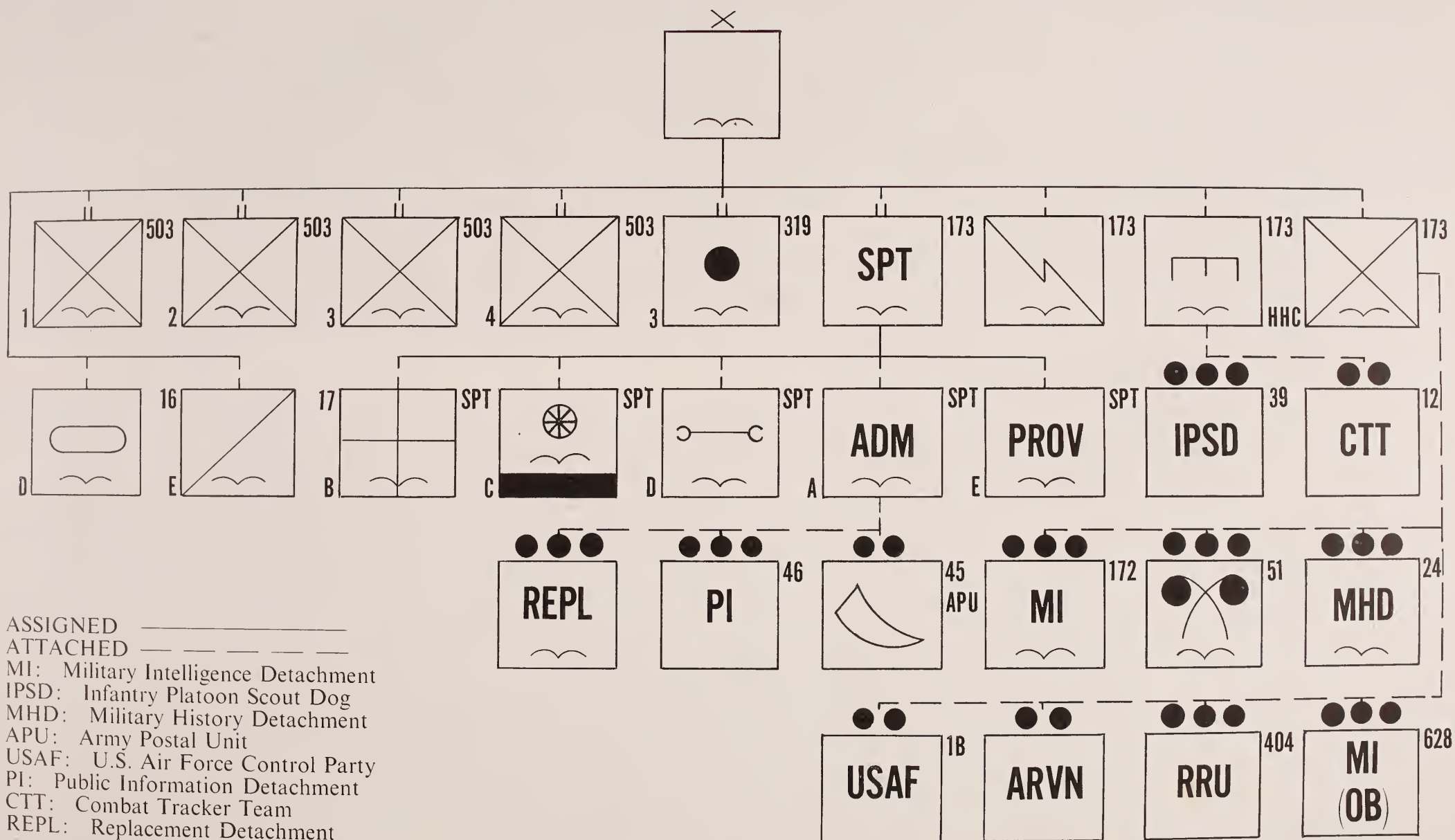
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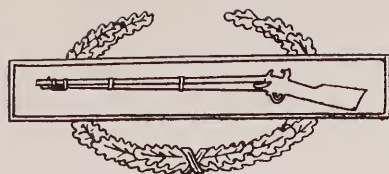
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173d Airborne Brigade





The Infantry

An army's might can be measured by the strength of its infantry. The infantry is the oldest branch of the army, dating back to colonial times. The methods of war have changed considerably since then, but no matter how sophisticated methods of weapons and war become, we still depend on the infantry to deliver the final blow to the enemy.

Fighting an unconventional war in Vietnam, against an enemy more apt to elude than take a stand, the infantry has had to adapt itself to meet the challenge of the guerrilla fighter. Now the enemy is beginning to realize that the U.S. Army infantryman is a versatile fighting man. He has consistently met the enemy on his own terms and beat him at his own game.

The airborne infantry soldier is a proud wearer of two highly held badges—his parachutists badge and the combat infantryman's badge.

He has fought in many battles against the aggressive enemy. One of the fieriest battles yet fought in the Vietnam war was during the Battle of Dak To when the airborne infantryman overwhelmed an enemy who continued to fight even after airpower scorched a hill with their lethal load.

The 173d has four infantry battalions: the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th of the 503d Infantry which have distinguished themselves during many critical testing periods.

Yet, it still remains that the infantry soldier, the infantry unit, and the infantry spirit is necessary to search out and destroy the enemy. How well he fights is recorded in the annals of history.



2nd Battalion receives Presidential Unit Citation

3d Battalion arrives in Vietnam







The Artillerymen

From the time a soldier first arrives in country until he leaves, the deafening sound of artillery pounds at his ears. The thunder of the big guns may unnerve the new arrival at first, but he soon realizes that the guns bellowing in the distance are his best friends.

Providing the heavy fire support for the Brigade is the 3d Battalion, 319th Artillery, composed of four firing batteries and a headquarters and a service battery. Each firing battery delivers fire support to one of the infantry battalions—and if the need arises, firing is quickly and capably switched to support additional units within range of the weapons system employed.

The battalion has twenty-two 105mm howitzers which fire at ranges up to 11,000 meters. The mission is to deliver swift, accurate, and continuous fire support to the maneuver elements. This mission has been effective in every manner.





The Cavalry

The cavalry of today's Army no longer depends upon horses. Instead, the cavalry uses the most recent developments in ground and air transportation to get them to their destination.

Once to their destination, the cavalry has many important functions. When attached to another Brigade unit, the Cav serves as a security force, a blocking force, or as a reconnaissance and surveillance force. When operating separately, the troop runs road clearing operations, escorts convoys, and conducts mounted and dismounted reconnaissance missions. Occasionally, the unit even deploys as a separate infantry force.

Troop E, 17th Cavalry, is unique because it is the only separate airborne cavalry troop and part of the only separate airborne brigade in the United States Army.



Major General William R. Peers, commanding general 1st Field Force and Sergeant Major Vincent D. Roegiers, 173d Airborne Brigade Sergeant Major, presents Troop E, 17th Cavalry the Valorous Unit Award for extraordinary heroism during Operation CEDAR FALLS in January 1967.

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.



Engineers

The 173d Engineer Company is a unique unit in that it builds, destroys, and fights.

Their job is to increase the combat effectiveness of the Brigade by performing tasks of construction and destruction. The results of these activities improve the mobility of friendly forces and impede the mobility of the enemy.

The engineers have to be versatile. One day they may build a road through dense jungle and the next they may have to destroy a network of enemy tunnels. Very

often the engineers are under fire by the enemy.

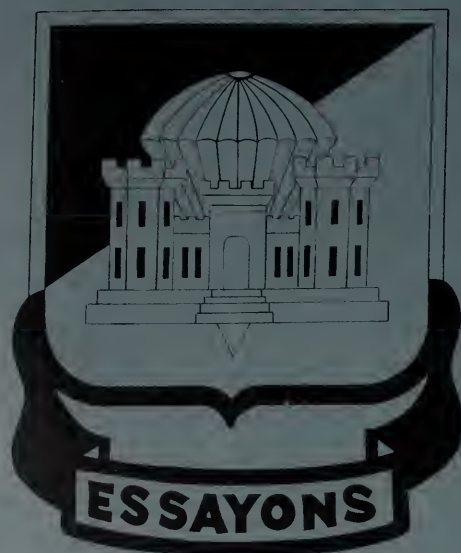
Engineers also sweep roads for mines, survey, explore, and clean areas for fire support bases and landing zones, provide water points, and are constantly supporting the Brigade Command Post with heavily fortified bunkers from which tactical operations are monitored and controlled.

Engineers are frequently attached to an infantry battalion during an operation. The airborne engineer moves as an infantryman—fighting and destroying.

No job is too big or too small for the 173d Engineer Company.



173^d ENGINEER COMPANY AIR BORNE



BEST IN 1967

Achievement in combat support operations has earned for the 173d Engineer Company, 173d Airborne Brigade, the highest award for an Army engineer unit.

The Society of American Military Engineers' Itschner Plaque was awarded to the 173d Engineers for the year of 1967 from a field of approximately 400 similar units stationed throughout the world.

Named "the most outstanding unit of the year," the airborne engineers received the honor for their "extraordinary professional competence and technical proficiency," as stated in the citation award, which made special note of the role the engineers played in the battle for Hill 875 in November 1967 at Dak To.

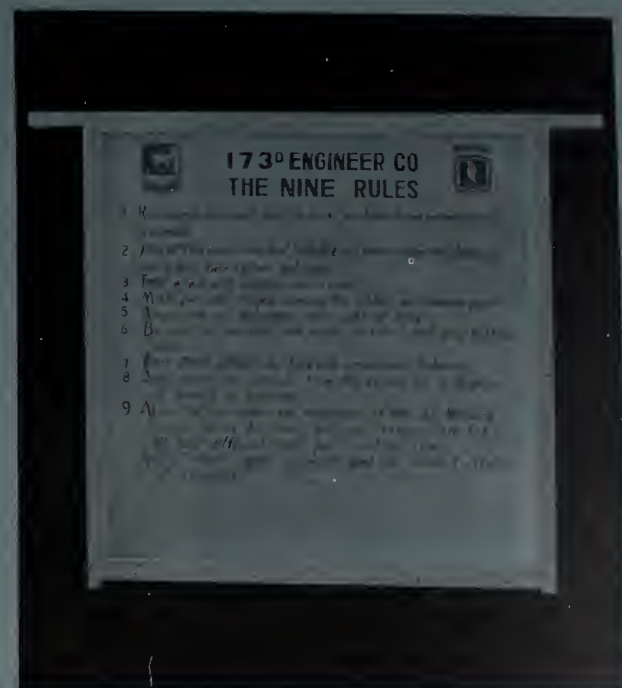
During the battle, the engineers were deployed with the infantry companies to destroy the bunker complexes of the enemy forward defensive perimeter. The engineers assaulted with flame-throwers and satchel charges providing the infantry with that hole in the line they needed to secure and

clear Hill 875.

The citation took note of the way the engineer paratroopers efficiently adapted to the ever-changing needs of the 173d in 15 different major combat operations from the jungled Iron Triangle to the Central Highlands.

Constructing forward support bases in 100-foot triple-canopied jungles, rappelling with the initial elements of the infantry in assaults, clearing landing zones, roads, and enemy fortifications were among the tasks and achievements noted by Brigadier General Leo H. Schweiter, former 173d commanding general, in his recommendation of the engineer unit for the award.

During the battle of Dak To, the airborne engineers were recommended for one Distinguished Service Cross and earned one Silver Star, twelve Bronze Stars with "V" device, two Air Medals, and three Army Commendation Medals with "V" device. In support of the Brigade's other combat operations the engineers participated in



during the year, they received 27 additional awards for valor.

Brigadier General George S. Blanchard, Chief of Staff of the First Field Force, commanded the engineer company for their participation in civic action projects in his endorsement to the recommendation. He noted the record of the company in working with ARVN units, attested to by the award of the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry to thirteen members of the company.

The Itschner Award is a silver plaque, named for the former Chief of Engineers, U.S. Army, and past president of the Society, Lieutenant General Emerson C. Itschner. Captain Thomas E. Weber, commander of the 173d Engineers Company, accepted the award on behalf of the company in Washington, D.C.

All active Army Engineer companies are eligible to compete for the award, which is intended to promote leadership in junior engineer officers and foster the esprit of all Corps of Engineer units.



Support

The Support Battalion is the Brigade's lifeline. It provides a wide variety of combat support functions that are vital to the total effectiveness of the rest of the Brigade.

Company "B" (Medical) provides teams of doctors and aidmen to operate the Brigade Clearing Station. "C" Company (Supply and Transport) hauls and stores the Brigade's supplies. Its aerial equipment support platoon furnishes parachute support to the men in the field. Third echelon maintenance is performed on all the Brigade's equipment by "D" Company.



Headquarters and Administration

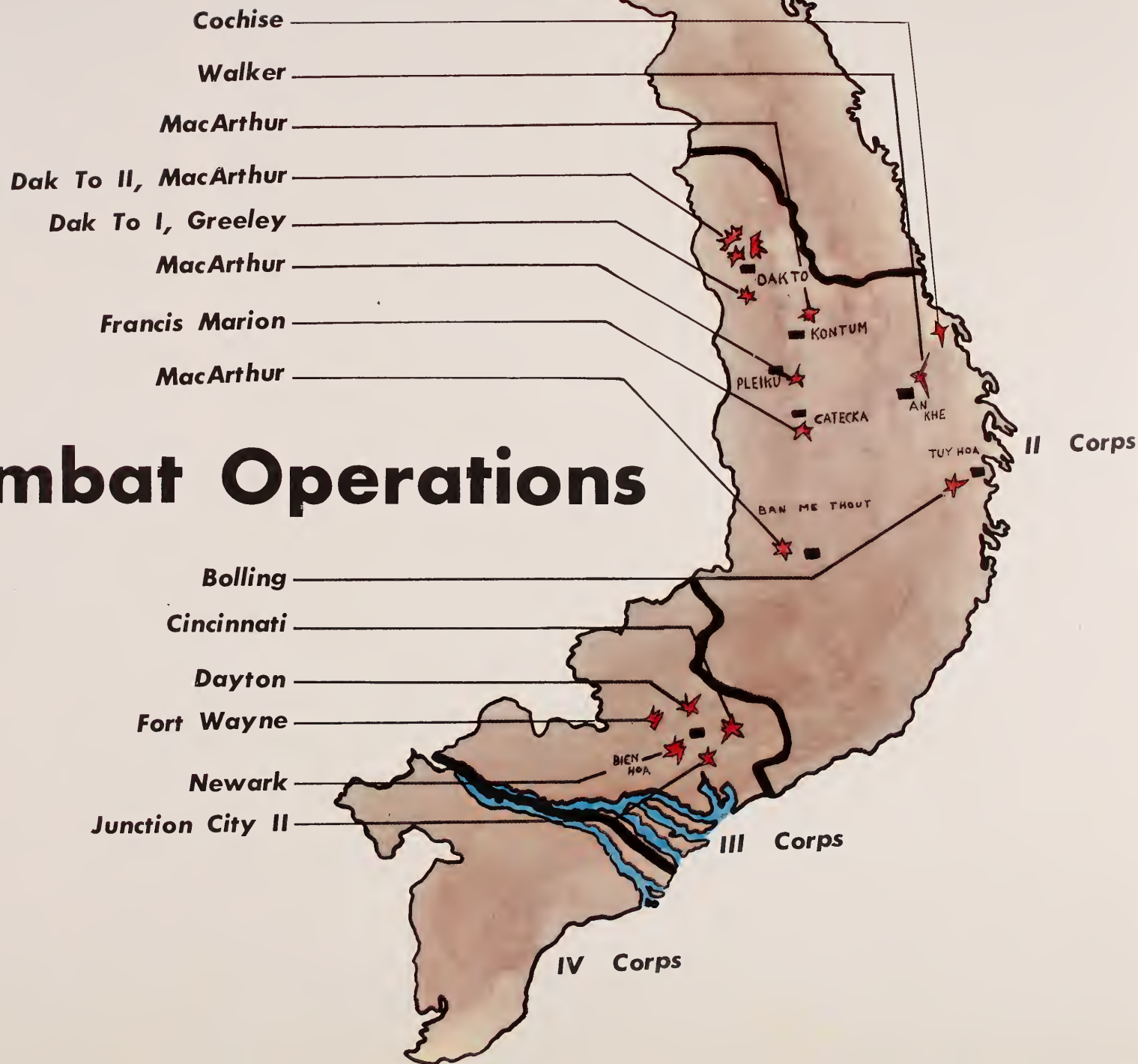
Brigade Headquarters and Headquarters Company, and Company "A" (Administration), are composed of many varied sections. Headquarters Company is responsible for the many attachments to the Brigade: 404th Radio Research Unit, 51st Chemical Detachment, 172nd Military Intelligence Detachment, 24th Military History Detachment, 46th Public Information Detachment, U.S. Air Force Control Party, 628th Military Intelligence Detachment, and Vietnamese army personnel. It is also responsible for establishing and securing the Brigade Forward Command Post.

Administration Company also handles a variety of tasks. The Adjutant General, Finance Offices, and the 45th Army Postal Unit all fall under the Company's control. Company A's Replacement Detachment processes all Brigade paratroopers on arrival, R and R, and DEROS.





Combat Operations



First In Vietnam

The 173d Airborne Brigade, first U.S. combat unit to arrive in Vietnam, fought the enemy throughout the II and III Corps tactical zones during combat operations in its third year in Vietnam.

The Sky Soldiers on February 22nd, 1967, jumped from C-130 aircraft at 1,000 feet to land on a 1,000-by-6,000 foot rice paddy near Cambodia. The 2nd Battalion Sky Soldiers received only light sniper fire as they descended on the huge clearing. Simultaneously, two more battalions of paratroopers were lifted by helicopters to adjacent landing zones and immediately the biggest allied offensive of the war was underway.

The first part of their mission complete, the airborne task force had jumped into combat with lightning speed, blocking the VC from the refuge of the Cambodian border. As JUNCTION CITY moved into March of 1967, the Sky Soldiers were credited with killing 304 VC soldiers.

Under the operational control of the 1st Infantry Division, The Sky Soldiers once again moved into the battle fields of War Zone "C" on March 20, spearheading Operation JUNCTION CITY II.

Their mission was to secure the area at Minh Thanh located

70 miles north of Saigon and to initiate airmobile operations on March 23. Small engagements with the 9th VC Division and the 272nd Main Force Regiment were made daily during the 23-day operations.

From early April to the last week in May, the 173d conducted four smaller operations in the Xuan Loc and Bien Hoa area. Nearly 100 more Viet Cong were killed by the Sky Soldiers as they conducted Operations NEWARK, FORT WAYNE, DAYTON, and CINCINNATI during the two month period.

Moving North

On May 24th, the Brigade was alerted for deployment to the green and rolling countryside of the Central Highlands, 250 miles north of their home base camp at Bien Hoa.

The decision to deploy the 173d northwest was a sudden one. The Brigade had just returned to base camp after completing Operation DAYTON in the May Tow area southwest of Xuan Loc, and was conducting Operation CINCINNATI, with the purpose of protecting the Bien Hoa-Long Binh complex. Before this was done, the Sky Soldiers were alerted for immediate deployment to





the II Corps Tactical Zone under the operational control of I Field Force Vietnam.

The Brigade's reaction was swift. Within 24 hours of notification, elements were moving by C-130 aircraft from Bien Hoa to Pleiku. The entire airlift required only 21 aircraft making a total of 208 sorties. Within 67 hours, 2,329 personnel and 2,701 tons of supplies and equipment were transferred to the II Corps Tactical Zone. In addition, a small element of the Brigade, consisting mainly of equipment too bulky to be airlifted, deployed from Saigon by ship. After landing at Qui Nhon, these elements came overland to the new Brigade CP which had been established at Catecka, just south of Pleiku.

The Brigade was placed under operational control of the 4th Infantry Division upon



arrival in the Pleiku area. The Ivy Division's Operation FRANCIS MARION, of which the 173d then became a part, had been in progress for sometime. The Sky Soldiers immediately began search-and-destroy maneuvers to the south of Catecka, concentrating primarily on the Ia Drang Valley area, the scene of the 1st Cavalry Division's heavy publicized engagements in 1966. Despite extensive patrolling in their area of responsibility, the 173d paratroopers made no significant contact during the operation.

New Dak To

While FRANCIS MARION was in progress, however, increased enemy activity was being observed in the Dak To area, some 54 miles farther north. A Special Forces/CIDG element had made contact on May 13 with an estimated North Vietnamese Company, and a Mike Force ran into another company near the same location on June 15th. The 173d was then called on to deploy a task force, consisting of one reinforced battalion, to the Dak To area to conduct operations oriented toward locating and destroying enemy elements. Accordingly, an advance party was flown to Dak To on June 16th, and the task force prepared to follow.

That night the Special Forces Camp at Dak To and the 42nd ARVN Regimental Headquarters in the nearby town of Tan Canh were both mortared. The Sky Soldier's advance party, bivouacked near the Special Forces Camp, also received mortar fire.

The following day, June 17th the task force deployed from Catecka to Dak To by







combination of C-130 and motor convoy. The force consisted of one infantry battalion, one cavalry troop, one platoon of armored personnel carriers, two artillery batteries, one engineer platoon, and other support troops.

While the deployment was in progress, however, the decision was made to increase the size of the task force to two reinforced battalions. Plans were quickly drawn up calling for additional deployment. The following day, another battalion moved to Dak To by C-130 and motor convoy. After the Brigade had been at Dak To for several days the second maneuver battalion was transferred there from Catecka. There appeared at this time to be two separate threats to the Dak To area: one from enemy forces to the southwest and one from other elements to the northeast. The 173d reunified at a new base camp, and was ready to commence operations against either or both.





Operation Greeley

The Sky Soldiers were not operating alone. Various units supported or worked with the Brigade at different times during Operation GREELEY. These include the 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry; 1st Air Cavalry, with its supporting artillery; C Battery, 1st Battalion; 77th Artillery; B Company, 229th Engineers; 937th Engineer Group; A Battery (155mm towed), 1st Battalion, 92nd Artillery; B Battery (105mm self-propelled), 3d Battalion, 6th Artillery; and C Battery (8-inch and 175mm self-propelled), 6th Battalion, 14th Artillery. All three artillery batteries were part of the 52nd Artillery Group.

Elements of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) were also operating in





conjunction with the Brigade. The 42nd ARVN Regiment, with its headquarters at Tan Canh, and the 1st ARVN Airborne Task Force, consisting of two airborne infantry battalions and a 105mm howitzer battery, conducted both highway security and significant search-and-destroy missions in the Dak To area.

There were several major contacts after the 173d arrived to blunt the enemy thrusts against the Special Forces Camps in this region. The 2nd Battalion, 503d Infantry, initiated operations to the south of Dak To on June 18th, and began moving back toward Dak To. On the morning of June 22nd, A Company came under heavy ground fire and attacks, including two mass assaults from the NVA battalion which had engaged them.



THE BOSTON HERALD

The New York Times



Paratrooper Heroes in Vietnam Assault ROCHESTER POST-BULLETIN

NO. 193

ROCHESTER, MINNESOTA, SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 1967

Paratroops Battle Dug-In Reds; Copters, Artillery Come to Aid

SAIGON — A multicompartment force from the Army's 173rd Airborne Brigade walked into a well-prepared enemy battlefield Monday 10 miles southwest of New Dak To, touching off a fight that killed 26 paratroopers and wounded 49 before Army helicopter gunships and artillery could drive the enemy off.

The action took place seven miles northwest of the spot where 84 paratroopers were killed when their company ran up against two well-equipped

The battle raged for more than two hours before Army helicopter gunships and artillery could drive the Reds from their bunkers.

The enemy broke up into three units when they withdrew, with two units fleeing toward the Laos-Cambodian borders to the west and southwest and the third headed into the mountains to the southeast, spokesmen said.

After the battle the paratroopers found six enemy bodies before darkness set in. No contact was reported Tuesday.

In other action:

The 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Div., tangled with an unknown-sized enemy force in Quang Ngai province.

The Reds hit the paratroopers with mortars and automatic weapons fire. Air strikes and artillery beat back the enemy force. Two U.S. soldiers were killed while one enemy body was found.

Fourteen Communist soldiers were killed by units of the 5th Marine Regt. two miles northwest of Tam Ky.

PACIFIC STARS STRIPES

★★★ EDITION

AN AUTHORIZED PUBLICATION OF THE U.S. ARMED FORCES IN THE FAR EAST

Vol. 23, No. 176

Monday, June 26, 19

475 ENEMY SLAIN AFTER HITTING GI'S

PRICE 10 CENTS

Estimates Over 400 Killed

N. Viet Battalion Destroyed: Westy

NEW DAK TO, Vietnam—Gen. William Westmoreland Sunday told survivors of a U.S. paratroop company they and their fallen comrades "killed over 400 North Vietnamese" and destroyed an enemy battalion which had crossed into South Vietnam from Laos.

Westmoreland, commander of U.S. forces in Vietnam, told survivors of the 173rd Airborne Brigade company their unit "virtually destroyed a battalion of North Vietnamese troops."

"It looks to me like you kicked the hell out of them," Westmore-

land said at the brigade's forward command post here.

The U.S. unit — from the 2nd Bn., 503rd Inf. — lost 76 men killed and 22 wounded Thursday in a day-long battle with two Communist battalions.

"You killed over 400 North Vietnamese," Westmoreland said. "I'm proud of you. You've been through a tough severe fight and have won it hands down."

(Spokesmen of the 173d said Saturday they estimated 475 Communist troops were killed, many by air strikes.

However, an official military

spokesman in Saigon said Sunday only 10 enemy bodies were found. Most of the bodies probably were buried or carried off Thursday night, one source said.)

Westmoreland said the first enemy battalion to hit the U.S. company (reportedly the 6th Bn., 24th North Vietnamese Army Regt.) "was an elite battalion when they crossed in from Laos, and they were in high spirits when they contacted you."

But, he added, "You know as well as I do they are no longer

in high spirits and they are no longer ready."

The battle took place barely three miles from where Westmoreland spoke at New Dak To. U.S. losses in the fight were 80 killed and 24 wounded.

A brigade spokesman said half the men in the 173rd were new troops with only a few months combat in Vietnam.

The battle was the first action of Operation Horace Greeley, which continued Sunday as a search and destroy drive in Kontum Province near the Laotian and Cambodian border.

Paratroopers Check 'Human Sea' Attacks

SAIGON (UPI)—Fighting in bloody hand-to-hand combat, U.S. Paratroopers beat off hordes of North Vietnamese troops who attacked in human waves using their own dead as shields, military spokesmen said today. Possibly as many as 450 Communists were killed.

The U.S. Command kept the Thursday battle in the Central Highlands a secret until today because two American platoons were missing and officials did not want the Communists to know it.

But most members of the platoons were found dead, spokesmen said. The 173rd Airborne Brigade Paratroopers suffered 76 men killed and 25 injured. Each of the

air raid on North Vietnam, with 171 missions thrown against the big Nam Dinh power plant and other targets. This was only four missions less than the record 175 flown last October 14. But no planes were reported lost in the raids Friday.

The Central Highlands battle engulfed two other companies; which battled to reach their trapped colleagues through some of the thickest jungles in Asia.

One moved in from the north, the other from the south. It took six hours of intense fighting for the southern column to reach the beleaguered company. The other company was beaten back.

The Paratroopers were

into an estimated 800 of the Communists as they swept up a ridegline 275 miles northeast of Saigon and 18 miles from the junction of South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

Hordes of the Communists surrounded one Paratroop company, about 200 men, and launched a series of human wave assaults carrying their own dead as shields, officials said.

Reports from the battlefield said the Americans hurled back two Communist charges but the third penetrated the company's defenses. It became every man for himself as the two sides locked in hand-to-hand combat.

Officials in Saigon said there was no firm figure of

Paratrooper Hit Reds In Fierce Battle

18 Americans, 98
Communists Killed
In Central Area

SAIGON (AP) — U.S. paratroopers and dug-in North Vietnamese troops clashed fiercely today in a battle that left 18 Americans and 98 Communist troops dead in the ninth day of fighting near Dak To in the central highlands.

The U.S. Command reported 95 paratroopers, from the U.S. 173rd Airborne Brigade, also were wounded in the day-long engagement.

A battalion-sized unit of U.S. 4th Infantry Division — perhaps 500 men — operating near also was reported in combat with enemy troops and exchanging fire with them into the night.

Communists ambushed a U.S. armored convoy in the same sector and killed five Army engineers and wounded seven in a 15-minute fight. The engineers called in artillery support and 13 of the enemy died under the counterfire.

The clash occurred as other U.S. soldiers probed a hill near Dak To. North Vietnamese troops threw back a U.S. assault on the Hill Friday and American artillery, gunship helicopters and warplanes then raked the hill repeatedly.

Monsoon rains sharply curtailed the air war over North but carrier-based Navy pilots made radar-guided bomb drops on the Kien An airfield 10 miles southwest of Haiphong. Bad weather prevented damage assessment. And Navy A-1 Skyraiders sank or damaged Communist supply boats and barges 22 miles south of Haiphong.

The fighting in the rocky central highlands 270 miles north of Saigon, near where Cambodia, Laos and South Vietnam meet, reflects the same enemy determination that cost the Viet Cong about 900 dead in efforts to seize Loc Ninh last week.

In eight days of fighting around Dak To, U.S. officials said, 450 Communist soldiers have been killed. They list casualties among the 4th Division and 173rd Airborne Brigade as 49 killed and 175 wounded the same period.

Associated Press correspondent Peter Arnett, noting that November has always been war's bloodiest month, reported that fighting at the onset of the year's fall dry season is more

Salute From General

General William C. Westmoreland, allied commander, later told the Sky Soldiers at Dak To that their effort prevented the NVA from overrunning the Special Forces Camp there. He saluted the 173d as one of the finest units in the history of the American fighting man.

The following week, the 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry, uncovered enemy base camps and hit an estimated NVA Company seizing a large cache of supplies. Two weeks later, the 4th Battalion, 503d Infantry made contact in another area with an estimated NVA Battalion. This engagement was characterized by a heavy volume of machinegun fire and automatic weapons fire before the enemy withdrew.

The 173d's attention focused increasingly northwest. Dak Seang Special Forces Camp, situated north of Dak To, and Dak Pek Special Forces Camp, located north of Dak Seang, both received sporadic mortar and recoilless rifle fire for an extended period



of time, while the Brigade concentrated on eliminating the enemy activity around Dak To. Also during this time the 1st ARVN Airborne Task Force, under the operational control of the 173d, engaged an estimated NVA battalion near Dak Seang on August 6th. The following day, after inflicting heavy casualties, the ARVN troops took enemy positions and found they contained an elaborate VIP command post, in addition to the friendly positions at Dak To.

The fight to eliminate NVA activity in the Operation GREELEY area continued. The Sky Soldiers, in the manner which came to be expected of them, gave an excellent performance against a new, better trained and equipped enemy than they had encountered in the III Corps area. Over a wide range of tough jungle terrain, the paratroopers successfully neutralized several separate threats to the relative security of the region.





Brigade Expands Operations

In the middle of September, the 173d began to look more like a division when the 1st and 4th Battalion deployed from the Central Highlands to the seacoast near Tuy Hoa in the Phu Yen Province.

The 2nd Battalion continued to conduct search-and-destroy missions in the Tumouroung Valley of the Central Highlands.

On September 19th, the main Brigade Command post at Phu Heip began to direct Operation BOLLING. The 1st and 4th Battalions and the 2nd of the 8th Cavalry, 1st Air Cavalry Division operated in the mountains and fertile valleys to the west of Tuy Hoa.





In Operation BOLLING, the 173d also worked in conjunction with the 9th ROK, and the 1st Battalion, 47th ARVN Regiment. The combined allied forces had a dual mission: the destruction of VC/NVA elements in the area, and the preservation of the rice harvest in the Tuy Hoa basin.

During October, the Brigade saw two changes. On October 15th, the Sky Soldiers moved from their base camp at Bien Hoa in the III Corps to Camp Radcliff at An Khe in the II Corps.

The second change was in the organizational aspect of the Brigade. On October 24th, a fourth line battalion, the 3d Battalion, 503d Infantry, joined the 173d Airborne Brigade after five months of extensive training at Ft. Bragg, where they were attached to the 82nd Airborne Division. The new battalion initially became involved in Operation BOLLING.

The 1st and 4th Battalions successfully completed their operation to protect the Vietnamese rice harvest west of Tuy Hoa during September and October. Then they deployed once again to Dak To in November to join the 2nd Battalion in Operation MACARTHUR.



The Fight For Dak To

The Brigade minus the 3d Battalion and D 16th Armor, returned to the Dak To region. Intelligence findings indicated that several NVA Regiments had reinfiltrated the heavily jungled area and were threatening the New Dak To Airstrip and the local Special Forces Camp.

The Central Highlands was nothing new for the 173d. They had seen action in this region on Operation GREELEY, which terminated October 14th.

In the ensuing battle for Dak To, the Sky Soldiers fought during their finest hour. The airborne infantrymen made repeated heavy contact with large forces of NVA over a bitterly fought, 20-day period.

On a remote covered hill designated 875, a battalion of well dug in NVA made a last ditch effort to stop the hard fighting paratroopers of the 2nd Battalion. Both sides took heavy casualties during the fight characterized by close-quarter fighting and communist human-wave assaults.

On Thanksgiving Day elements of the 4th Battalion rose to the crest of the hill and ousted the last of the NVA defenders.





During December, the Sky Soldiers continued Operation MACARTHUR in the Central Highlands. The first two weeks of December were spent conducting operations west of Dak To in the Kontum Province, while the 3d Battalion, and D. 16th Armor continued Operation BOLLING in the vicinity of Tuy Hoa.

On December 14th, the 4th Battalion, Troop E, 17th Cavalry, and the Brigade CP returned to Tuy Hoa leaving the 1st and 2nd Battalions in the Dak To - Kontum area under the operational control of the 4th Infantry Division.

In Operation MACARTHUR enemy activity and findings continued to slacken during the month of December, while action picked up in Operation BOLLING area. The Brigade elements in the Tuy Hoa area maintained daily contact with VC/NVA forces operating in the rich rice basin. On December 27th, the 3d Battalion made four heliborne assaults and encountered three hot LZ's. During the bitter fighting Sky Soldiers reported uncovering 51 communist bodies and capturing 18 small arms.





On December 26th, the 2nd Battalion moved from Dak To to Kontum, to conduct search-and-destroy operations with the 1st Battalion. The area of operations around Kontum proved to be cold.

Brigade At An Khe

During the month of January, 173d elements made numerous small skirmishes in Operation BOLLING and MACARTHUR. On January 16th, the 3d Battalion moved to An Khe. Upon arrival they immediately assumed responsibility of the base defense of Camp Radcliff, kicking off Operation WALKER.

On January 26th, the perimeter of Camp Radcliff was penetrated by an estimated VC platoon. The An Khe Airfield was hit by 60mm mortar rounds resulting in heavy losses to the installations in the area. The 3d Battalion reaction force killed 13 enemy and captured one.



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.



During the third year in Vietnam, the 173d Airborne Brigade did not limit its activities to fighting the enemy. Extensive civic action programs were conducted by the Sky Soldiers during all operations to deepen the ties of friendship between South Vietnamese and Americans. More than 60,000 civilians received medical aid from the Brigade doctors and medics during visits to villages and hamlets. Paratroopers have contributed both time and money for construction projects aimed at raising the living standards for our South Vietnamese allies. To promote better understanding the 173d organized numerous English classes for children of Bien Hoa.

Millions of leaflets were dropped within the Brigade's area of operation in support of its combat activities. As a result, many VC and NVA soldiers defected to the South Vietnamese Government.

It was a tough but gratifying year for the Sky Soldiers. They have smashed the enemy in the South and in the Central Highlands. Their deeds have made headlines all over the world. This was the third year in Vietnam.





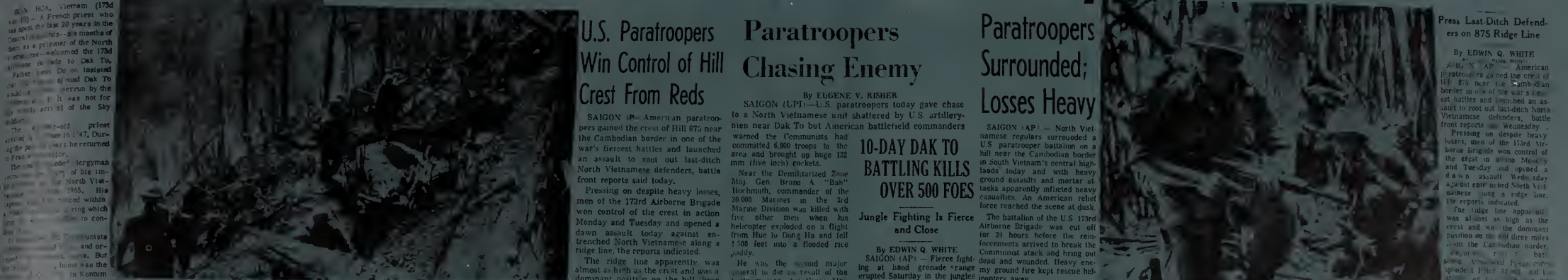
The Fight

For Dak To

Sky Soldiers Foil Enemy Troops on Hill 875: Tired but Triumphant

Says Priest Who Greets Them

CHUTISTS SEIZE HILL CREST IN FIERCE FIGHT



The View From the Top of Hill 875 in the Central Highlands

AMERICAN FORCES moved toward the crest of Hill 875 near Dak To in South Vietnam where a 21-day battle saw at least 285 Americans die. The Central Highlands lost the enemy at least 1,400 men. (Story on Page 7. AP Photo.)

Los Angeles Times

Take Hill 875 After 5-Day Battle

SAIGON (AP)—U.S. paratroopers gained the crest of Hill 875 near the Cambodian border in one of the war's fiercest battles and launched an assault to root out last-ditch North Vietnamese defenders, battle front reports said today.

Pressing on despite heavy losses, men of the 173rd Airborne Brigade won control of the crest in action Monday and Tuesday and opened a dawn assault today against entrenched North Vietnamese along a ridge line, the reports indicated.

The ridge line apparently was almost as high as the crest and was a dominant position on the hill three miles from Cambodia.

Bombings Precede Attack

Reporting from the battle scene, Associated Press correspondent Peter Arnett said the assault on the ridge line was preceded by repeated U.S. bombing strikes.

The fighting on Hill 875 has left at least 79 paratroopers dead and another 178 wounded since Sunday. Total U.S. losses in the 22 days of fighting around Dak To have been put at 246 dead and 860 wounded.

Paratroops Finally Seize Hill 875 After Bitter 5-Day Battle

SAIGON (AP)—A company of U.S. paratroopers finally took Hill 875 today winning a Thanksgiving Day prize after nearly five days of fighting as hard and bloody as any in the Vietnam war.

The U.S. force launched its final assault on the last ridge line held by the stubborn North Vietnamese at 11:30 a.m.

Founded incessantly beforehand by U.S. bombs, artillery shells and napalm, the enemy put up only light resistance at the end, Associated Press Correspondent Edwin Q. White reported from Dak To.

Twenty-five minutes later U.S. forces consolidated their positions. There were no other details immediately available.

May Wind Up Battle

Capture of the hill may signal the windup of the battle of Dak To, bloodiest of the war for Americans and North Vietnamese alike.

Reports from the battle sector said the paratroopers pulled back from close to the ridgeline late Wednesday to allow repeated air strikes on the entrenched North Vietnamese. They spent a cold night in hillside caves.

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Members of the 173rd Airborne Brigade look down as they run from sniper fire on a ridge line near the top of embattled Hill 875 near Dak To. (UPI Radiophoto.)

Red Losses Climb

GIs Take Hill 875 After 5-Day Fight

SAIGON (AP)—Battle-weary U.S. paratroopers captured Hill 875 Thursday—Thanksgiving Day—after five days of bitter fighting.

The Times-Picayune

Serving America's International Gateway Since 1837

U.S. Paratroopers Win Control of Hill Crest From Reds

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Paratroopers Chasing Enemy

By EUGENE V. RISHER

SAIGON (UPI)—U.S. paratroopers today gave chase to a North Vietnamese unit shattered by U.S. artillerymen near Dak To but American battlefield commanders warned the Communists had committed 6,000 troops to the area and brought up huge 122 mm (five inch) rockets.

Near the Demilitarized Zone Maj. Gen. Bruno A. "Bab" Hochmuth, commander of the 28,000 Marines in the 3rd Marine Division was killed with five other men when his helicopter exploded on a flight from Hue to Dong Ha and fell 1,500 feet into a flooded rice paddy.

He was the second major general to die as result of the Vietnam war. Air Force Maj. Gen. William J. Gurnea died last July when two B-52s from Guam collided in flight and plunged into the sea 80 miles north of Saigon. It was believed Hochmuth was not the victim of enemy fire.

Fighting also flared in the coastal lowlands near Tam Ky, 30 miles north of Saigon and Communist machineguns shot down two helicopters and damaged five others as troops of the 1st Air Cavalry Division made a helicopter assault Monday against Red strongpoints.

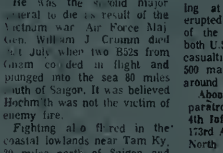
Bomb Retreat Route

In the Dak To area a B-52 bomber's dropped tons of bombs on the Communist retreat path while paratroopers tried to track down the North Vietnamese in the bamboo thickets of the Central Highland hills. No major contact was reported but Communist gunners fired several rounds of 120 mm rockets at the Dak To headquarters.

A spokesman at Dak To said one reason the Communists as often have stood and fought was because they did not want to leave their big rocket launchers on the battlefield. He said the Communists so far had lost 650 dead and the Americans 101 killed and 384 wounded.

American tactic of bomber flew 83 close range sorties against the North Vietnamese well-entrenched positions, hoping to knock their big guns out of action.

Hordes of North Vietnamese stormed out of the jungles Monday.



MAP LOCATES the battle area in South Vietnam where North Vietnamese regulars and United States

Paratroopers Continue Push—Brutal Battle Involves 173rd Airborne Brigade

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Short of food and water, the paratroopers battled stiff enemy fire as they continued their push to the summit. They used flame throwers against the enemy's intricate bunker system.

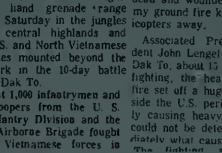
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Paratroopers Surrounded; Losses Heavy

SAIGON (AP)—North Vietnamese regulars surrounded a U.S. paratrooper battalion on a hill near the Cambodian border in South Vietnam's central highlands today and with heavy ground assaults and mortar attacks apparently inflicted heavy casualties. An American relief force reached the scene at dusk.

The battalion of the U.S. 173rd Airborne Brigade was cut off for 24 hours before the reinforcements arrived to break the Communist attack and bring out dead and wounded. Heavy enemy ground fire kept rescue helicopters away.

Associated Press correspondent John Lengel reported from Dak To, about 15 miles from the fighting, the heavy communist fire set off a huge explosion inside the U.S. perimeter, possibly causing heavy casualties. It could not be determined immediately what caused the blast.



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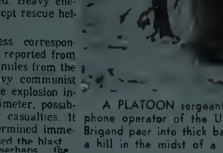
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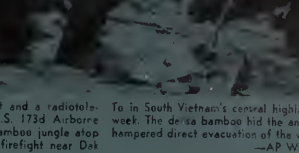
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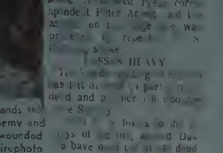
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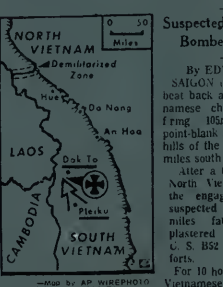
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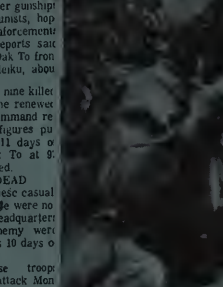
Suspected Enemy Camp Bombed After Fight

By EDWIN Q. WHITE

SAIGON (AP)—U.S. troops beat back a furious North Vietnamese charge late Monday using 105mm howitzers a point-blank range in the jungles hills of the central highlands 14 miles south of Dak To.

After a two-hour battle, the North Vietnamese broke off the engagement, but their suspected major camp two miles farther south was plastered early Tuesday by U.S. B-52 eight-engine strategical bombers.

For 10 hours before the North Vietnamese struck, the enemy had rained mortar and rocket shells on positions of the U.S. forces, elements of the 173rd Airborne Brigade.



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ARMY DIGEST

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

DECEMBER 1967 VOLUME 22, NO 12

Airborne Keeps Low as Enemy Attacks

Troopers of the 173rd Airborne Brigade crouch behind a tree near the crest of Hill 875 as they come under heavy fire from

Airborne Keeps Low as Enemy Attacks

what was believed to be a company of North Vietnamese regulars. Action took place about 10 miles from Dak To. (AP Radiophoto)

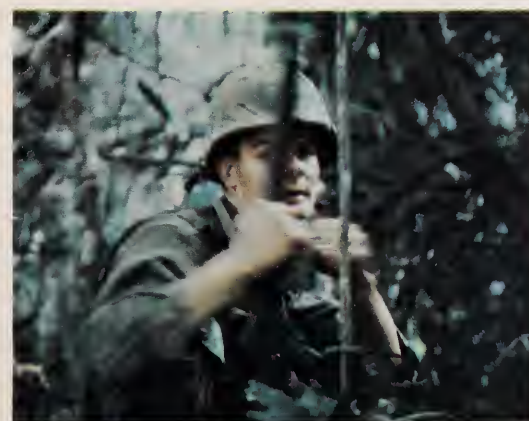
Hell on High Ground—The Fight for Hill 875



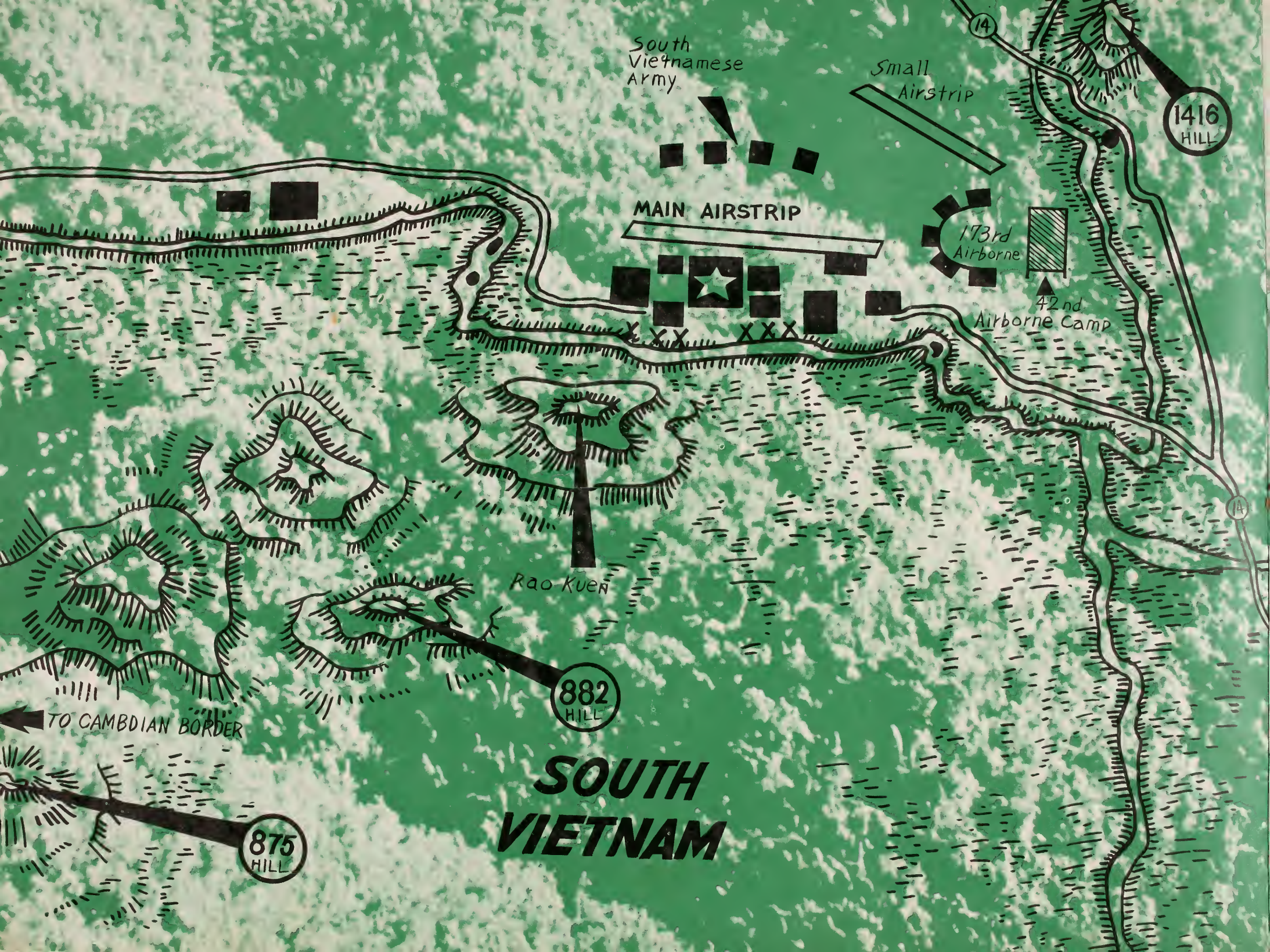












South
Vietnamese
Army

Small
Airstrip

1416
HILL

MAIN AIRSTRIP

173rd
Airborne

42nd
Airborne Camp

Rao Kuen

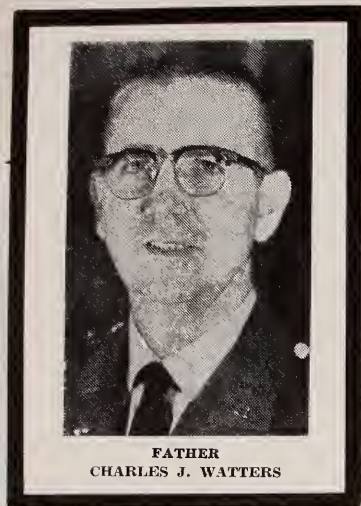
882
HILL

**SOUTH
VIETNAM**

875
HILL

TO CAMBODIAN BORDER







Last Mass

On a remote bamboo-covered hill in Vietnam near the Cambodian border, Chaplain (Major) Charles J. Watters said Mass to a battalion of paratroopers before the Sunday battle.

During his 16 months of duty with the 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry, 173d Airborne Brigade, Father Watters became as close as he could to the men. He knew most of them by name. He had listened to their confessions, delivered their Masses, and labored for solutions to their problems. He was their Chaplain.

He was with his men when they parachuted into battle and worldwide fame last February to spearhead Operation JUNCTION CITY. He was also there when they sloshed through the rich coastal rice paddies near Tuy Hoa and climbed the rugged mountains surrounding Dak To. "He felt his place was with the men in the field, no matter where they went, or what they did," said fellow Catholic Chaplain (Major) Roy V. Peters. "He was hard-core."

He never went without his Mass kit. At an opportune time, he would don his camouflaged vestments and set up a make-shift altar on a stack of "C" ration cases. The jungle served as his church. The 2nd Battalion paratroopers would gather around at Father Watters' familiar call, "It's Mass time." "We always knew when

to come to church with Father Watters around," recalled one of them.

Last May, he was with the men of Charlie Company when the paratroopers came under small arms and claymore fire from a Viet Cong force of unknown size. Under heavy enemy fire, Father Watters rushed forward to the side of a fatally wounded man. He remained with the paratrooper until he had administered last rites and the Sky Soldier was extracted from the battle field. For his heroic action, Father Watters was awarded the Bronze Star for Valor.

Not long ago, Father Watters extended his Vietnam tour by six months. "He decided to make the military his life," explained Father Peters. "He felt he could do the most good in the Army."

As usual, the airborne priest was with his men recently when the battalion assaulted a North Vietnamese force estimated at battalion size, well dug in atop Hill 875. During the ensuing battle, both sides suffered heavy casualties.

Despite the deadly mortar and small arms fire, Father Watters moved among the wounded. Then he too was hit. He died beside his men, ministering to them and helping with their evacuation.

One paratrooper summed up the battalion's feeling simply; "From beginning to end, he was our chaplain."





The War

Search and Destroy

Many of the first operations the Brigade conducted after arriving in country were termed "search and destroy." The purpose of such operations is just as the name implies—to search an area and to destroy or capture enemy personnel and equipment.

The enemy must be tracked down and fixed before he can be taken under fire and destroyed. This type of action is necessary because of the nature of counter-guerrilla warfare in which the enemy seeks to harass, evade and hide.

The efforts of every individual is coordinated to locate the enemy. When contact is made the infantryman maintains pressure on the enemy location, while artillery and air power are called in to pound enemy positions.

The airborne infantryman has the mission of actually closing with and destroying the enemy. When the artillery and air support is completed, it is the infantryman who must ferret out the small pockets of enemy resistance.

Many times the enemy avoids contact by easily fading into the surrounding jungles—to be chased until he can be destroyed. When he stands to fight it will be the airborne infantrymen who will carry out the mission of—SEARCH and DESTROY.



















Combat









Dust Off

To the wounded, the valuable minutes between the time he has been injured and the time he receives adequate medical treatment can mean the difference between life and death.

Because of this difference the medical evacuation helicopter units, more commonly called "Dust Off", attempts to fly into some of the tightest and insecure landing zones ever seen in this country.

The man initially on-the-spot and responsible for the lives of many soldiers is the combat medic always moving under fire to assist the wounded.

When "Dust Off" arrives, the wounded soldier is placed aboard and flown to a nearby medical facility. While in flight, treatment is continued by a qualified aidman who is also a crew member.

The bravery of the "Dust Off" crews has been proven many times by their landings under fire and in seemingly inaccessible places.

Medical support is provided by "B" Company (Medical) personnel who are capable of providing extensive medical treatment to the wounded.







Chaplains

The Army Chaplain plays a vital role in Vietnam. To the men in combat, who face the perils of war daily, he is a bright beam of light giving them renewed faith and placing in perspective the difficult job they have to do in a country thousands of miles from home.

The Army Chaplain has provided this guiding light since the days of the Revolutionary War. The gallant men of the chaplaincy have proven again and again their courage and unstinting devotion toward the moral and spiritual well-being of the combat soldier.

In the field, the Chaplains have to improvise. It is not unusual to see a moss-covered rock become an altar or a rain-drenched jungle become a church. The services are simple, but the combat soldier appreciates the quiet reassurance that comes from this simplicity.

The Chaplains of the 173d Airborne Brigade are among the finest in the armed forces. They have served under fire, aiding the wounded, both physically and spiritually.

Somehow these dedicated men of God find the time for a moment of silence and prayer in a war that is very real—anytime, anywhere.





LRRP



Allies





39th Scout Dog Platoon

A 1st Battalion, 503d Infantry soldier, commenting on his battalion's destruction of a NVA ambush patrol: "That dog was directly responsible for saving the men of his company from injury or death."

Such tributes have often been paid to the men and dogs of the 39th Scout Dog Platoon. The platoon is charged with training the man-dog teams used by the line units in the Brigade for tracking the elusive guerrillas in the dense jungle.

The dogs, all German Shepherds weighing between 50 and 100 pounds, are trained at Ft. Benning prior to shipping over to Vietnam. When they arrive at the 173d Airborne Brigade they undergo a refresher course with the soldier assigned to be their handler.

The scout dog teams train using decoys in the rugged brush country around the Brigade area. The success of the teams in battle has proven the merit and practicality of the program.



Jungle School

Whether a clerk, a radio-telephone operator, or a platoon leader, all incoming personnel in enlisted ranks through sergeant first class, and second and first lieutenants attend the 173d Airborne Brigade Jungle School.

The school strives to make each new arrival in Vietnam a more effective soldier by acquainting him with the ways of the Brigade, the Vietnamese people, the country, and the War.

Students in the school profit by the hard fought for experiences of the combat veteran instructors. The fears, doubts and questions of the new personnel are answered.

Classes in weapons and jungle tactics serve both as a review and as a source of completely new information for the new arrival. Informative classes on what to wear, how to pack, how to recognize the enemy, and why we are in Vietnam are designed to enrich and orientate the students before they move to forward operational area.

"Be Alert and Stay Alive" is the school's motto.



To coordinate fire missions of heavy mortars, artillery, and Army and Air Force aircraft, a fire support center (FSCC) located within the Brigade Tactical Operations Center (TOC) clears all requests for indirect fire. With FSCC control, it has been possible to conduct the combined fires of air strikes and artillery fire simultaneously with close coordination.

Artillerymen from the 319th fire the 105mm howitzer in direct support of each battalion in the Brigade. Fire is adjusted based on information received from an artillery forward observer (FO) who moves with each infantry company. The forward observer requests fire through the Fire Direction Center (FDC) located at the battalion fire support base.

Additional fire support from the 60mm, 81mm, and 4.2-inch mortars, is used by the battalion commander for quick support. Also at the commander's disposal are aerial fire support from Army helicopters and Air Force tactical bombers.

Armed helicopters—called gunships—provide close and extremely accurate firepower. Armed with 40mm grenade launchers, M-60 machine-guns, and 2.75-inch rockets, these gunships are a welcome sight to the infantrymen in battle with the enemy.

Tactical airpower is requested and coordinated by a Forward Air Controller—called "FAC". He flies in an O1-E "Bird Dog" observation aircraft. Always above a battle scene the "FAC" can observe enemy movement and adjust incoming jets quickly and accurately.

Unheard and out of sight, but bringing a devastating load to preplanned targets is the B-52 Strato-Fortress—surprise through silence and force.



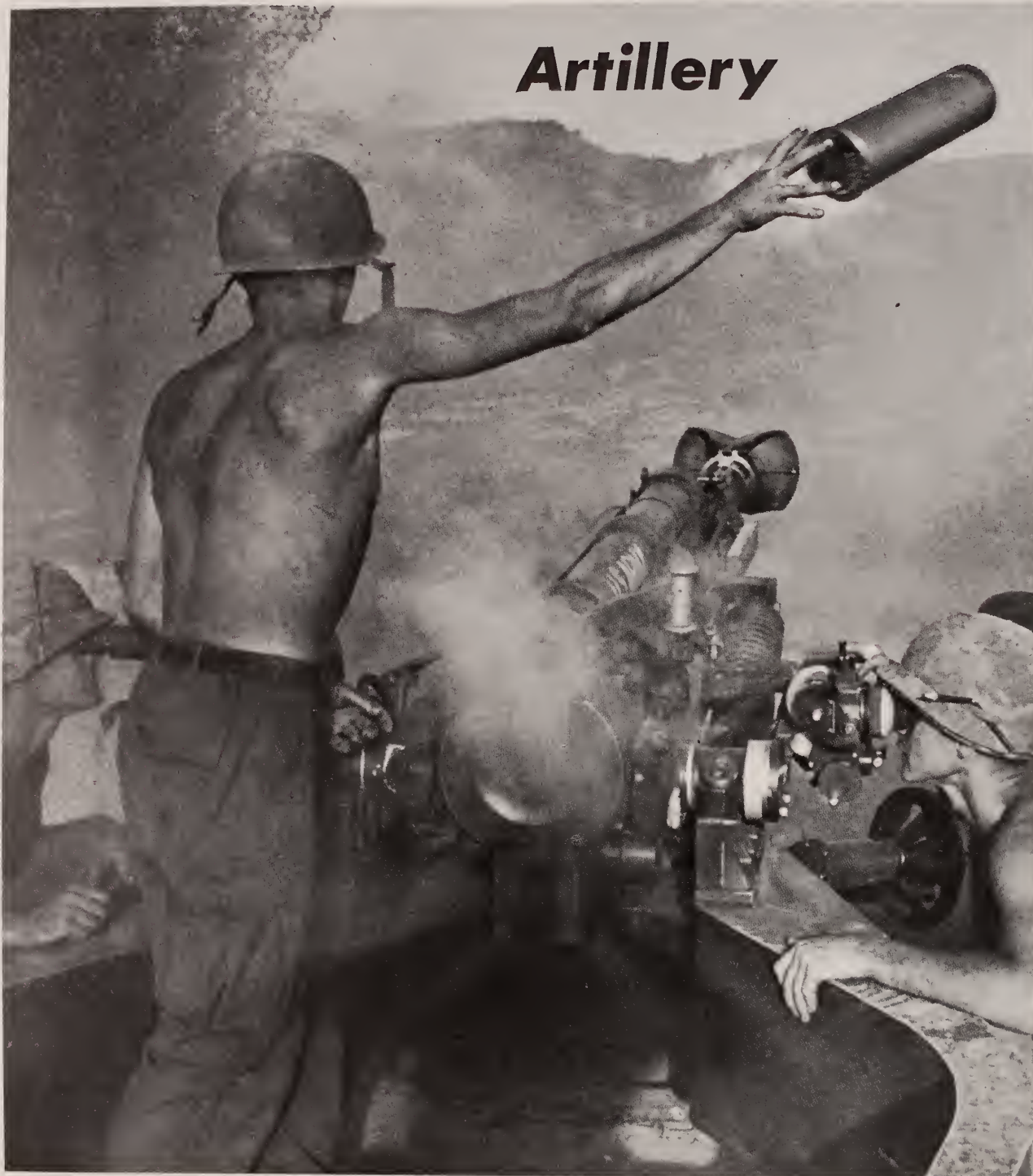
Fire Support



Mortars



Artillery







Tac Air





Success on the modern battlefield is dependent upon fire superiority, and the success of fire superiority is dependent upon the ground commanders best friend the Forward Air Controller (FAC).

The primary mission of the (FAC) is to provide the connecting link between the air and ground forces, to ensure maximum efficient use of tactical air power.



Combat Support





An outstanding lesson learned—or relearned—in Vietnam is the fact that combat support and combat service support are of extreme importance to the successful conduct of offensive or defensive operations, and that the movement of troops and supplies to the critical point at the critical time has been, and will continue to be the dominant factor in winning a battle, or a war. Conversely, it has been learned that the loss of one's ability to move troops and supplies entails the loss of initiative and a limitation of action which can only result in final defeat.



Civic Actions





The United States provides assistance to foreign countries in two forms—combat and civic actions. The latter program is the responsibility of the Brigade S-5 (Civic Action).

Civic action, sometimes referred to as the “other war,” wins the hearts and minds of the people by helping the Vietnamese to help themselves. This is accomplished through the construction of schools, roads, bridges, dispensaries, churches, waterways, homes, and other worthwhile projects designed to provide the people with a better way of life and instill in them a sense of pride.

The program is planned to be self-sustaining after hostilities have ceased. During hostilities it is designed to give the people of the Republic of Vietnam a feeling of unity, purpose, and confidence in the Government of Vietnam. Civic action also provides a source of intelligence to combat units as the people confide in those who take interest in their problems. The potential to obtain useful intelligence is never overlooked.

Civic action teams move out to the many villages in the area of operations and provide the people with medical and dental services. These two programs, Medical and Dental Civic Action Programs, constitute a great deal of the S-5's help programs. Doctors, dentists, and medics treat patients and distribute needed supplies to the villagers. Sometimes food and clothing are distributed to improve health conditions.



The Civil Affairs Section strives to further the cause of freedom in Vietnam by bringing aid to the sick in combat torn and disease infested areas, and by working jointly with government officials at province and district level.

Winning the loyalty of the Vietnamese people to the government is as critical as fighting the enemy. When the people realize that their government is sincere in its efforts to pacify the country, to build the economy, and to administer and govern justly, the enemy will be deprived of support from the people.



The Land





The People



Don't know '68











The Enemy





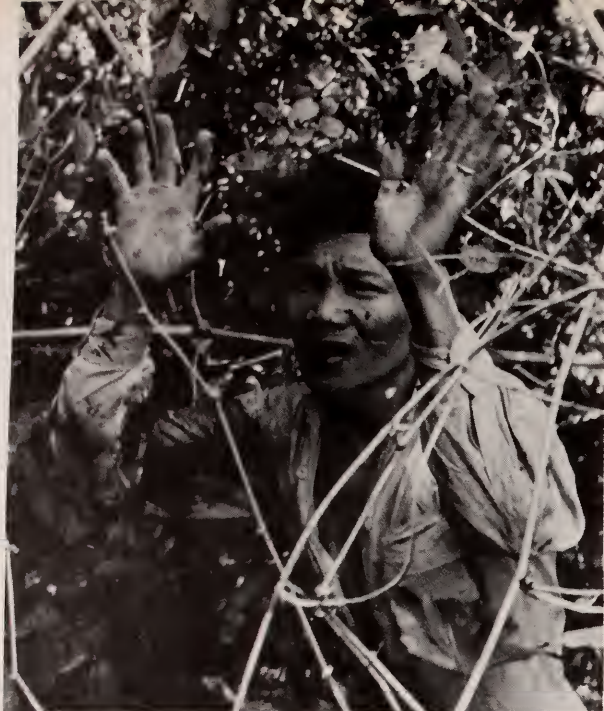
Small by American standards, the Viet Cong and their North Vietnamese counterparts have proven to be a formidable foe. He can survive on a few fistfuls of rice for days at a time; devise crude, but effective weapons; tolerate the rigors of the steaming jungle; live off the fat of the land, and if necessary ream out complex tunnels beneath the ground.

The jungle is his home; his job is war. His military tactics run the gamut from Hannibal to Mao Tse Tung, and he wields his terroristic sword with might and precision.

"Charlie" has a favorite tactic—the ambush. For a long time he was successful against those who didn't know the land or the enemy, but the ambush is beginning to lose much of its punch because the Allied Forces have developed many equally good counter-ambush techniques.

Elusive, nomadic, the Viet Cong continue to strike, but the mounting pressure is causing him a heavy toll.





The Viet Cong's northern brother, the North Vietnamese Regular, is well-trained and equipped. He is the professional soldier whereas the Viet Cong are often farmers by day and guerrilla fighters by night. The North Vietnamese soldier is usually drafted into the army and forced to make the long, arduous trip to South Vietnam. His pay is almost nothing; a private receives five piasters a month.

Even though the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) soldier is not resupplied as well as U.S. Army troops, he cannot be dismissed lightly. A professional, he is highly indoctrinated by his leaders.

He is aware of his striking power and uses it to full advantage. When a major offensive is made, it is usually the NVA who launch it. The North Vietnamese Regular is a skilled soldier, but we have consistently defeated him. He is becoming increasingly hard pressed and desperate in his war in the south. How long he will remain as an effective fighting force is a formidable question.

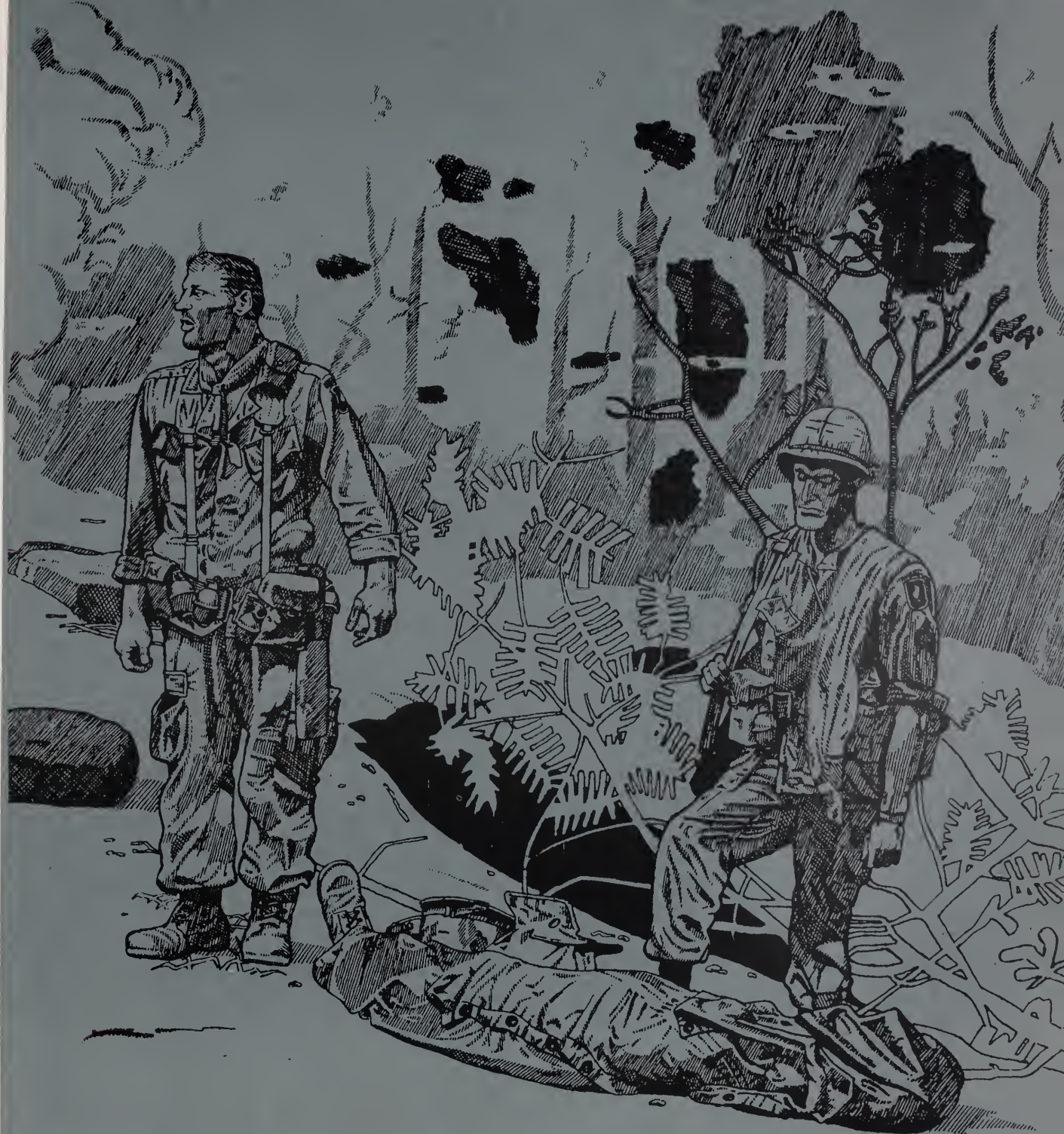
The Sky Soldiers



"Airborne" is more than a pair of glittering wings, it is an idea symbolizing that a man believes enough in himself and his country to go one step beyond just serving his time. He strives to be the best.

Many of the troops arriving in country have just finished jump school. It doesn't take long for them to learn that they are assigned to one of the finest fighting units in military history—the 173d Airborne Brigade.

The Sky Soldier is the main ingredient in the illustrious record of the 173d. Without him the 173d would be just another unit, but with him the 173d will live on and continue to be one of the finest.



Robert
Brown

















Medal of Honor

In Vietnam all front line troops are heroes; most of the valorous acts they perform go unrewarded. But once in a great while the actions of an individual soldier win him the highest recognition not only of his fighting buddies, but of the U.S. Army and his country. In the 173d's history, there have been four such men.

In February, 1966, Sergeant Larry Pierce was posthumously awarded the first Congressional Medal of Honor in the Brigade for saving the lives of three of his men by throwing himself on a claymore mine.

Company A, 2nd Battalion, had made contact with a platoon of Viet Cong when an enemy soldier threw a grenade at Private First Class Milton L. Olive and four of his buddies. Without hesitation, PFC Olive jumped on the grenade, muffling the deadly explosion with his own body at the cost of his life. His four buddies escaped unharmed and in April, 1966, Olive was awarded the Medal of Honor posthumously.

In December, 1966, Specialist 6 Larry Joel was the Brigade's third recipient of the award, for his heroic action while a combat medic in Company C, 1st Battalion. As the battalion fought a day long battle against a 700-man communist unit, Specialist Joel, who was wounded twice himself and was unable to walk, crawled his way through the battle area, constantly exposing himself to enemy fire as he administered vital aid to badly wounded paratroopers.

Sergeant Charles Morris, the most recent Medal of Honor winner, has also received the Distinguished Service Cross. As a squad leader in Company A, 2nd Battalion, although hit 30 times by Viet Cong bullets and grenade fragments, Sgt. Morris carried on a fierce fight for 5 hours, personally knocking out VC machine gun nests, killing numerous VC, aiding wounded Americans, and encouraging his men until the arrival of a relief force.



Larry S. Pierce



Larry Joel



Milton L. Olive



Charles B. Morris

