



9th Infantry Division



The Old Reliable

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Republic of Vietnam

December 4, 1968

Cavalry, Recondos rip into VC platoons, kill 52

By SGT James Woody

DONG TAM – Ninth Division 1st Brigade “Recondos” joined with artillery, gunships and Air Force fighter-bombers to kill 52 Viet Cong, destroy 55 bunkers and 30 motorized sampans and break up two enemy local force platoons just north of Cay Lai Nov. 23.

Action began when gunships of A Troop, 3d Squadron, 17th Air Cavalry spotted a group of VC, wearing blue shirts and black shorts and carrying AK-47 rifles. The cavalry engaged the enemy in the rice paddies with rockets and minions.

Company A of the 6th Battalion, 31st Infantry was inserted by foot at 10:30 a.m. and began to move toward the then-bunkered enemy force. Companies B and D soon followed them through the napalm and mud.

Meanwhile, air strikes were called in on the enemy positions. One station was an Australian Canberra, which dropped its bombs on a bunker complex with pinpoint accuracy, destroying 40 of the structures. Four U.S. Air Force jets soon added their destructive power. They were credited with killing seven VC.

With the infantrymen moving in on the VC, B Batteries of the 1st Battalion, 11th Artillery and the 1st Battalion, 84th Artillery dumped artillery fire on the enemy.

At one point a Light Observation Helicopter was forced down when a sniper hit the pilot in the leg. But the observer safely landed the chopper and the cavalry's Aerorifle Platoon secured it. The wounded pilot was evacuated for medical aid and a new pilot brought in. He was the day's only U.S. casualty.

“The bunkered areas were blown apart and the Viet Cong hiding inside didn't have a chance.” Commented one mud-covered infantryman.

The cavalry gunships were credited with 42 enemy kills and the infantrymen killed three.

“We also captured three AK-47 rifles and ammunition, one M-1 rifle, one M-79 grenade launcher, one SKS assault rifle, 22 ChiCom grenades, some web gear and several pounds of documents,” stated Lieutenant Colonel Jack R. Logan, of Cornwall on Hudson, N.Y., commander of the 6th/31st.

“A real team effort,” said Colonel John P. Geraci, the Recondo commander, from Brooklyn, N.Y. “Anybody can get a gun and fight, but we used our heavy firepower to protect the infantrymen and together we walked right through the enemy.”



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Treat over 1,600 at 6-31 MEDCAPS

DONG TAM – Over 1,600 Vietnamese were treated in a recent 20-day period by the 6th Battalion, 31st Infantry MEDCAP team.

“We treated everything from fevers to staph infections,” said Specialist Five Lupe S. Duran, of Los Angeles, a medical aidman.

Such 9th Division MEDCAP teams go into villages to treat illnesses they find. In the Mekong Delta, these range from ringworm to malnutrition.

“Most of the old people need vitamins and eye drops,” said SP5 Thomas H. Hill, of Greenville, S.C., another member of the MEDCAP team. “We also find a lot of cataracts in the old villagers.”

Before Highway QL-4, the road to Saigon, was secured and opened, commerce was held up and food could not be distributed through the markets. Livestock was turned loose to roam the countryside.

But now that it is again open to traffic, there is no shortage of food and MEDCAP teams are able to travel even to remote villages.

“Now they’re used to us and aren’t afraid of us anymore,” Duran said. “It makes our job a lot easier and we can treat more people if they aren’t afraid of us.”



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VC big losers

Indian trick flops

DONG TAM – The Viet Cong tried an old Indian trick in a Kien Hoa Province canal recently, but a 9th Division platoon was not fooled and killed the two enemy soldiers from its night ambush position.

The Company D platoon from the 6th Battalion, 31st Infantry set up the ambush near a bridge across the canal in the early evening.

At about 2:30 a.m. the soldiers spotted two VC quietly paddling a sampan down the canal, carefully watching both banks. When the 3d Brigade platoon opened fire, they headed for the bank opposite to the infantrymen. One was immediately injured by machine gun fire, and both fell out of the small boat.

"We thought we had hit them both, but as it turned out evidently one of them had just jumped into the water," said Private First Class Clyde M. Hardman, of Mount Vernon, N.Y., the platoon's RTO.

The gunfire ceased and everything was quiet until one soldier noticed that the boat was gently rocking and slowly moving down stream.

Realizing that they enemy were using the sampan in an attempt to make a concealed escape, the platoon again began to fire at the boat. A round from the platoon's grenadier splintered the already sinking craft into small pieces and ended the VC's evasion effort.

"They almost got away," said Hardman, "but they didn't quite make it." The platoon also killed a third VC soldier whom they spotted traveling down the canal in another sampan around midnight.