



# 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division



## The Old Reliable

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Republic of Vietnam

December 18, 1968

### Recondos take heavy toll of VC

#### 1<sup>st</sup> in Long An, Dinh Tuong

by SP5 Eric Johns

FIRE SUPPORT BASE MOORE -- Encountering VC and NVA soldiers in Gia Dinh, Long An and Dinh Tuong Provinces, the 1<sup>st</sup> "Recondo" Brigade was the strike force in five sustained operations during the past year.

As the 9<sup>th</sup> Division's second year in Vietnam began, the Recondos were involved in Operation RILEY, providing strike and security forces in Gia Dinh province. Its troops protected the bases at Long Binh and Bien Hoa and Camp Martin Cox.

Brigade soldiers killed 420 enemy, took 495 detainees, captured 203 weapons and confiscated over seven tons of rice. Most of these kills were made by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion (Mechanized), 47<sup>th</sup> Infantry and one company of the 4<sup>th</sup>/39<sup>th</sup> reacting to the VC TET offensive.

On February 10 [1968], the brigade relocated to Dong Tam and commenced Operation HOPTAC I, relieving enemy pressure in Dinh Tuong Province. The 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 60<sup>th</sup> Infantry and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry used night ambushes and constant recon-in-force missions to secure Highway 4, the vital link between Saigon and the Delta.

The largest contact of the operation was the February 25<sup>th</sup> attack on Fire Support Base Jaeger, 10 miles west of Dong Tam, by 500 enemy soldiers of the 263<sup>rd</sup> and 264<sup>th</sup> VC Battalions. Troops of the 5<sup>th</sup>/60<sup>th</sup>, supported by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 34<sup>th</sup> Artillery and the 1<sup>st</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> Artillery, killed 94 enemy and captured 50 weapons in the four-hour battle.

After working a week with Operation Truong Coag Dinh in clearing out VC lingering around My Tho, the Recondos began Operation DUONG CUA DAN (Peoples Road) March 16. The mission of "Peoples Road" was to keep open Highway 4 between My Tho and Cai Be, rid it of snipers, secure engineers improving the road, work with the ARVN 7<sup>th</sup> Division, and prepare Regional and Popular Forces to accept the security duties.

Continuing its ambushes and sweeping missions 3,000 yards on either side of the highway, the brigade "beat the enemy at his own game," according to Colonel Henry E. Emerson, then brigade commander.

"We've got to make jungle cats out of our men if we are to succeed," said Emerson at the time. "We want to be able to leave a new road here under the protection of the Vietnamese."

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With this mission accomplished, the brigade moved to Long An Province June 22 and set up headquarters at Tan An. The Infantry Battalions: 2<sup>nd</sup>/39<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>/60<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup>/31<sup>st</sup>, established base camps throughout the province.

Working throughout the province and in southern portions of Gia Dinh, the Recondos began Operation TOAN THANH II, conducting strike missions, blocking enemy infiltration routes, providing road and bridge security on Highway 4 and reconnoitering the rocket pocket south of Saigon.

The operation's largest body count resulted in action September 3-6 when a company of the 2<sup>nd</sup>/60<sup>th</sup> inserted three miles west of Can Giuoc to protect a downed helicopter. When contact erupted, companies from the 2<sup>nd</sup>/60<sup>th</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>/39<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup>/60<sup>th</sup> were brought in. The infantrymen and their supporting elements from Troop A, 3<sup>rd</sup> Squadron, 17<sup>th</sup> Air Cavalry and the Air Force killed 131 VC.

Ten Recondo companies encircled an estimated VC Battalion August 12 in the "Mouse Ears" 10 miles southeast of their Tan An headquarters. With artillery and airstrikes pounding the enemy location as the ground troops closed in, 104 enemy died.

A week later nine companies and supporting gunships killed 93 enemy soldiers and captured 45 weapons 17 miles east of Tan An.

Emerson was injured when his helicopter was shot down in August and Colonel Ira A. Hunt, Jr., came from his position as Division Chief of Staff to take command of the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade. He remained at the post until Colonel John P. Greasy joined the Division in mid-October and took over the Recondos.

The Recondo troops and their supporting elements killed over 2,000 enemy soldiers, captured 668 weapons and took 196 prisoners during their part in Operation TOAN THANG II. They turned the operation over to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade November 14, along with their Tan An headquarters.

At the same time, they accepted the continuing Operation TUYET CHIEN in Dinh Toung Province, moving the Brigade headquarters to Fire Support Base Moore. Its maneuver battalions now included the 2<sup>nd</sup>/39<sup>th</sup>, the 3<sup>rd</sup>/39<sup>th</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>/39<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup>/31<sup>st</sup>.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade troops wasted no time in taking their toll of the enemy as three companies of the 6<sup>th</sup>/31<sup>st</sup> combined with air cavalry and jets to kill 58 enemy four miles south of Cai Be on November 23.

"The only U.S. casualty in the contact was one soldier injured," Geraci later commented, "This action was a real team effort. 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."

A week later, two companies of the 2<sup>nd</sup>/39<sup>th</sup>, supported by 3<sup>rd</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> gunships and light observation helicopters (LOHs) and 1<sup>st</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> Artillery, killed 86 VC in actions between Cai Be and Cai Lay.



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### 3d Bde 'Devils' harass VC

by 1LT Bill Lafield

TAN AN – From the streets of Saigon to the waist-deep water of the Plain of Reeds the 3d Brigade has made its presence known to a harassed enemy during the 9<sup>th</sup> Divisions second year in Vietnam.

The 3d Brigade has taken part in Operations ENTERPRISE, QUYET THANG and TOAN THANG during this past year and has worked in Dinh Tuong, Go Cong, and Long An provinces as well as in the city of Saigon.

The first heavy action for the 3d Brigade came during the enemy's TET Offensive in early February. The VC attacks began shortly before Brigade Commander Colonel George Everett was due to leave the brigade for a new assignment.

The "Go Devils" launched into heavy TET fighting around Ben Tree where the VC had infiltrated the city. A small group of Vietnamese government officials and U.S. advisors were putting up a gallant fight and their ammunition was almost exhausted when the brigade arrived.

Men from the 2d Battalion, 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry, 3d/29<sup>th</sup> and 2d/60<sup>th</sup> fought from house to house killing more than 150 VC and driving them from the city. The 9<sup>th</sup> Division troops surrounded the fleeing enemy and helicopter gunships cut them down as they tried to hide or escape.

Infantrymen of the 2/60 found one of the largest enemy weapons caches of the TED Offensive on February 16 along the Bo Canal, an infamous VC infiltration route in the Plain of Reeds. After being tipped off by an Air Force Forward Air Controller (FAC) assault helicopters engaged over 100 sampans in the canal sinking 93. When the infantrymen were inserted the following morning, they found four heavy anti-aircraft guns, 580 rocket rounds, 450 assorted mortar rounds, 29 recoilless rifle rounds and more than 200,000 rounds of small arms ammunition.

Colonel George W. Everett commanded the "Go Devils" through the TET Offensive and then turned the brigade over to Colonel George C. Benson, who subsequently led the brigade through the VC's publicized "Second Offensive" in May. Colonel John A. Hemphill has commanded the brigade since August.

On April 22 elements of the brigade's 3/39 and 4/39 decisively engaged a large North Vietnamese regular unit killing 45 in the Ong San river section of Long An province.

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One day before the VC May attacks began, Benson, sensing that attack was eminent, sent the 5<sup>th</sup>/60<sup>th</sup> (Mechanized) to the Cholan area of Saigon. Next morning the offensive began and the brigade's 3/39, 4/39, 2/47 and 6/31 joined the 5/60 in Saigon to drive the enemy from the city.

In five days of intense street fighting the "Go Devils" pushed every Vet Cong and North Vietnamese unit from the southern outskirts of Saigon. Most of the fighting was in the built up section along the Kinh Doi Canal at the "Y" Bridge. Over 800 of the enemy were killed in their attempt to capture the capital city from the south.

After the May offensive the 3d Brigade moved to Dinh Tuong Province where they undertook Operation Quy Thang (Will to Win). On October 4-5 elements of the brigade's 1<sup>st</sup>/16<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>/31<sup>st</sup> with air support from Troop D, 3d/5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry and artillery from 1<sup>st</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> Artillery engaged an estimated VC battalion practically annihilating it.

During the two days of fighting in the desolate Plain of Reeds, the "Go Devils" killed 139 VC and captured 17 enemy soldiers and 160 weapons.

In mid November the 3d Brigade moved to Tan An in Long An Province. They immediately began offensive operations to search out the VC units known to be there. Employing tactics such as night ambushes and bushmaster operations, the 3d Brigade has taken a steady, mounting toll of the enemy.