



Red's Coming-Out Party

A Viet Cong soldier holds his rifle over his head as he emerges from an underground hiding place and surrenders to South Korean Marines who discovered his hiding place after a fight with the enemy during an operation 18 miles southwest of Da Nang. (UPI)

Chapman: 30,000 Can't Be Wrong

S&S Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — Marines are extending their tours in Vietnam at the rate of about a battalion a month, according to Marine Corps Commandant Gen. Leonard F. Chapman Jr.

Since the 1965 buildup in Vietnam, the Marine general said more than 30,000 had voluntarily extended their tours by at least six months and last December alone of the 8,000 Marines due to come home 3,200 decided to extend.

Chapman made these remarks Tuesday in a talk before a Navy League seapower symposium in support of his belief that "Our Marines know what they are doing is right. They believe in

what they are doing — and they keep doing it."

Chapman said Marines in Vietnam have set new standards of uncomplaining sacrifice and devotion to duty.

"We've given youngsters of 18 and 19 the responsibility for defending villages with a Marine squad — and he's surprised us with his ingenuity, competence, and courage," Chapman declared. He's done it with good nature and humor, too. I've commented many times on the signs that he writes on his helmet, his truck, or on his sand-bagged bunker. He keeps up his morale with those signs — but he has also given my morale a boost, too.

"I'm always proud to be with Marines — but I think I stand a bit taller when I'm with the Marines in South Vietnam. They have a spirit and an elan which is inspiring."

Cited by Viets

NHA TRANG, Vietnam (Special) — The Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces Commendation Certificate for psychological warfare operations in the IV Corps Tactical Zone has been earned by C Flight, 5th Special Operations Sq. at Binh Thuy Air Base.

Air-Ground Teamwork Caches-In for Marines

By CPL. BOB PARTAIN

CON THIEN, Vietnam (Special) — The Marine helicopter touched down near Con Thien and eight Marines wearing jungle utilities, their faces camouflage-painted to blend with the rugged terrain, scurried out of the helicopter and headed for the dense underbrush and cover.

They were on their own. Their mission: find the enemy and his arms caches.

The eight-man team from the 3rd Reconnaissance Bn. did just that.

"The first sign of the enemy came just after the helicopter had put us down," recalled Cpl. Ken B. Williams. "As the chopper took off, the pilot spotted North Vietnamese Army (NVA) soldiers in front of our position. They were firing at the helicopter."

"We had moved about 160 yards and stopped for a security check, when we heard what sounded like four or five groups of two or three men each, walking toward our position," said Cpl. Mike Schatz.

"Broncos from MAG-39 (Marine Aircraft Group 39) flew over and spotted the Reds, opened fire on them and drove the NVA away from us," said Lance Cpl. David P. Chreitzberg, a member of the team.

The remainder of the day passed without incident as the Marines cautiously searched the area for signs of the enemy and his munitions caches.

"On the third day we were following a 5-foot-wide trail when an NVA soldier jumped out of a tree and started running," recalled Pvt. Clay Babb, point

man for the patrol. "We stayed in our positions and again radioed for an aerial observer."

Soon a light observation plane was on station to aid the Marines.

"When the AO arrived, he immediately spotted nine enemy around us and called in another Bronco. The pilot fired everything he had at the enemy and drove them away," said Lance Cpl. Oscar Muckerson.

The team also called in artillery fire on the enemy positions before starting to move up the trail again.

"We started to pass some new bunkers and then all of a sudden there were bunkers all around us," related Cpl. Mark A. Killian, the team leader. "We checked out the bunkers and found all kinds of ammunition in them."

Killian entered one bunker and found four 12.7mm anti-aircraft guns.

"They were just laying there next to the wall of a bunker," continued Killian. "They looked as if someone had just disturbed them. There was loose ammunition in the area and also spare parts for the guns."

"We radioed the battalion and asked them what they wanted us to do," said Cpl. Joe E. Carraher.

"We were instructed to stay in the area, that a reaction force was en route to help us guard the find," added Carraher.

When two additional recon teams arrived to provide security, the Marines set up a perimeter defense for the night.

Enemy movement around the Marines, however, persisted and

was getting closer. Killian started down a trench that the enemy had been using to approach the Marines' position and spotted four Red soldiers about 50 yards down the trenchline.

"I jumped out of the trench and into another one and then opened fire on them with my M79 grenade launcher," said Killian. "I stayed down there an hour until I spotted a few more of them going down a hill, jumping from trench to trench, before I returned to our perimeter lines."

The following morning Marine engineers were flown into the area to blow up the large munitions cache.

"We were standing security for the engineers when I spotted another NVA soldier in a khaki uniform just walking along a trail. I opened up on him and didn't see him get up again," recalled Williams.

Marine engineers used 600 pounds of plastic explosives to set up charges for blowing the enemy ammunition. They were soon ready to clear out of the area.

The complete cache discovered by the team included 8,600 rounds of 12.7mm anti-aircraft ammunition, 800 rocket-propelled grenades, 1,350 mortar rounds, 10,000 rounds of small arms ammunition, 10 cases of TNT, 11 cases of Chinese Communist grenades and 1,100 assorted mortar fuses and other equipment. All were destroyed.

The four enemy anti-aircraft guns, discovered by Cpl. Killian, were returned to Quang Tri Combat Base, home of the 3rd Reconnaissance Bn.

Alert GI Gets a Leg Up

BACH KIEN, Vietnam (Special) — Battlefield promotions are not necessarily rare in themselves but when a brigade and a battalion commander put in a double appearance to handle the honors, it is an unusual event.

Sgt. James P. Wirth, a reconnaissance NCO with the 9th Inf. Div., 2nd Bn., 4th Arty. was engaged in a combat operation when a helicopter dropped in on the soggy battlefield.

Wirth was attached to B Co., 5th Bn., 60th Inf., operating in the Plain of Reeds last Feb. 2.

Out of the copter leaped Col. John A. Hemphill, 3rd Brigade commander and Lt. Col. Robert Dirmmeyer, 2nd Bn., 4th Arty., commander.

Together, they walked briskly up to Wirth, who was sporting Spec. 4 stripes at the time. Hemphill whipped out a knife and cut off the old stripes and handed them to the obviously nervous Wirth.

Then they pinned on his new rank.

The reason for the spot promotion was Wirth's action during

another combat mission which took place five miles northwest of Bach Kien and resulted in eight Viet Cong being killed.

B Co. was carrying out a night operation when one detainee was apprehended. Wirth said the detainee was supposed to lead his unit to some Viet Cong, but it looked as if the unit was being led into an ambush.

Suddenly the company came under small arms and automatic weapons fire from an estimated two platoons of VC. The artillery sergeant's reactions brought quick results and within minutes illumination and artillery were supplied the infantry unit. The combined firepower of the infantrymen and artillery drove the Reds away, leaving eight enemy dead.

"I called in and got the illumination and then an aerial observer was sent to adjust the artillery," Wirth said modestly, but his battalion commander felt a little stronger about his actions.

Wirth came into country as an infantryman with a heavy weapons MOS, but Dirmmeyer is

pleased he made the change and became a "redleg." He said it was Wirth's "quick reactions and knowledge that enabled the company to repel the enemy attack. I wish that we could get more infantry converts like him."



Aussie Commander

Maj. Gen. R. A. Hay is the new commander of Australian Forces in Vietnam. He succeeds Maj. Gen. A. L. McDonald who held the post from January 1968 and is now returning to Australia.

Pilot Wins 11-Hour 'Poker Game' in Sky

PLEIKU, Vietnam (Special) — Piloting a frail, unarmed observation plane, Capt. Albert B. Morton stayed in the jaws of Communist ground fire for more than 11 hours to call in air strikes and artillery barrages that demolished an enemy stronghold.

Morton, a platoon leader with the 219th Airplane Co., flew an O1 Bird Dog from Pleiku AB one

recent morning to "look for action." He speedily found it.

Tracing a road southwest of Dak To, he drew a shattering blast of fire from 30 to 40 automatic weapons. Swinging back to locate its source, Morton next drew fire from three .30 cal. machine guns.

The Long Branch, N.J. pilot had already called for artillery and it was smashing in — but

now three .50-caliber machine guns were hammering at him. Then three more opened up.

It was like a poker game. As Morton contacted a forward air controller and called in air strikes, the enemy raised the stakes once more. A 37mm anti-aircraft gun blasted at the oncoming fighters. Between air strikes, three more heavy machine guns opened up — and

three 37mm's fired at the second wave of fighters.

Morton was over the target all the way, adjusting 140 rounds of 175mm artillery and also directing friendly ground troops as he made repeated passes.

The score — no friendly casualties, while the Communists lost four machine guns, about 12 bunkers and an unknown number of men.