

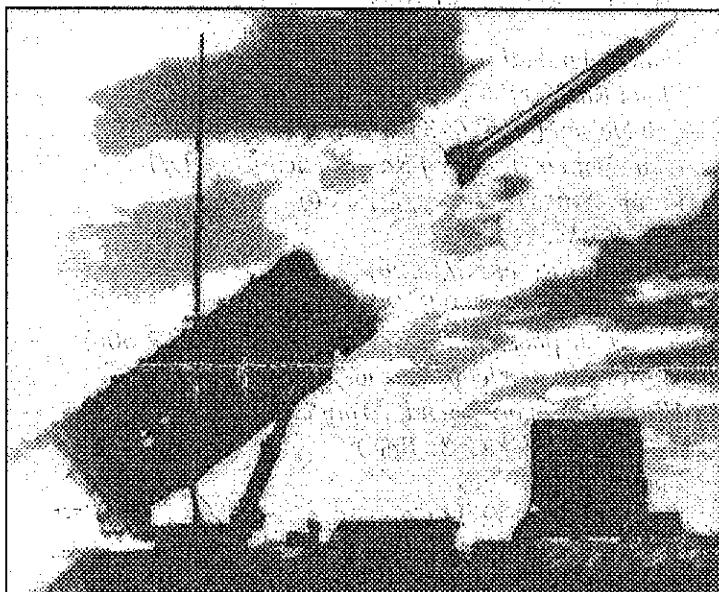
RIPCORD REPORT

For friends and survivors of Fire Support Base Ripcord, Republic of Vietnam, 12 Mar.—23 July 1970

No. 44

May 1997

SPOTLIGHT ON PATRIOT



MIM-104 Patriot

(From Craig East's 'The Chock Full O'Missiles Page' on the Internet.)

Designed in the late 1970s as an anti-aircraft weapon, the Patriot was modified in the mid-1980s to defend against ballistic missiles as well. It is armed with a 200-lb. high-explosive warhead detonated by a proximity fuse, spraying high-velocity fragments at the intended target, destroying it. Sometimes, two missiles are automatically fired against a target to ensure interception.

The Patriot gained widespread praise during the 1990-91 Persian Gulf War. It was hailed as a savior for U.S. troops against incoming Iraqi Scud missiles in Saudi Arabia. The Patriot was also used in Israel to defend against Scud missile attacks.

As it turns out, analysts have since determined that the Patriot was not as phenomenal as once thought. The Iraqi Scuds were breaking up in mid-air, and the Patriots were merely picking out pieces of the disintegrated Scud as it fell to Earth. Still, the Patriot is one of the most modern surface-to-air missiles in the world today. The Patriot was initially operational in 1985.

I Scud you not!

A little-known tale, told (mostly) tongue-in-cheek, about a SNAFU in the Arabian Desert ... one that even the most battle-hardened veterans will chuckle at.

WASHINGTON—Ever since pre-antiquity, when human combatants first devised ways to hurl projectiles at each other, man, the warrior, has had to learn to defend himself from attack through the air. Simply posting signs—"Watch for Falling Rocks," or "Detour, Boiling Oil"—didn't cut it.

Early defenses were passive and dumb. These included helmets and shields, often of wood or hardened leather stretched over a frame, and even bound straw. Nobody had a clue about "smart weapons" or even "smart shields" way back then. All they hoped for was that their protection would be better than the airborne missiles that might rain down upon them in combat.

Up to this point missiles were thrown by hand, sometimes aided by slings or throwing sticks. Then somebody came up with the idea for a catapult, a machine that could hurl really big rocks a long distance. Since nobody wanted to stop fighting they began to develop better and more sophisticated protective gear. Eventually, entire attacking formations were protected by many-story moving towers. This happened in antiquity, a sort of post-neolithic arms race.

That was then. Today, advanced military technology can absolutely, 100 percent, no-foolin' guarantee that enemy rocks won't fall on the heads of American troops in combat or anywhere else for that matter. Welllllll ... mostly.

Consider the amazing performance of modern, "smart" weapon technology.

Point 1: Ninety-three percent of Operation Desert Storm veterans interviewed thought they could have won the war in Vietnam with smart munitions. (Incidentally, 99 percent of Vietnam veterans believe they could have won Desert Storm with one arm tied behind their backs.)

Point 2: It is a well-known fact in the super-secret "Q" ring of the Pentagon that CIA-supplied high-tech Stinger missiles were solely responsible for driving the Soviets out of Afghanistan. More recently, declassified extra-super-secret KGB files in the Kremlin show that the Stinger may have been used for Russian President Boris Yeltsin's heart operation. And the Stinger is only smart enough to seek heat. Heck, dogs and cats are that smart.

Continued on next page ...

Point 3: Ultra-extra-super-secret files at the U.S. State Department's overseas travel office reveal that Bill Clinton would have considered volunteering for Vietnam if we had the smart weapons then that we have today. Maybe.

Comes now the Patriot missile of Gulf War fame with its super-smart computer and software code. The Patriot is so chock-full of human-engineered target identification and tracking algorithms, and so jam-packed with precision paradigms for controlling its lock-on and fire command module, that it unerringly busted dozens upon dozens of incoming Scud missiles Saddam Hussein hurled at coalition forces from Iraq.

But wait, you say, that simply isn't true. You're right. That's the point.

Despite the apparent success of today's high-technology weaponry, Patriots included, some of the time they screw up. In fact, one Patriot in the Gulf War didn't even fire at an incoming Scud that it should have detected. A clueless Patriot? Sort of, actually. The problem lay in the mathematical calculation scheme of a decision algorithm in the Patriot's software. Professor Julian Palmore of the University of Illinois in Urbana explains why technology failed at a critical moment:

"A timing problem is illustrated by a significant real world example. An attack by a Scud missile on Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, during the Persian Gulf War, was not engaged. As documented by a U.S. Government Accounting Office report, an accumulation of timing errors caused the failure of a radar system to detect and to identify a missile that should have been defended against by the Patriot. This, in turn, resulted in a failure to launch a Patriot.

"The timing problem was a mismatch between a timing computation and the stroboscopic view by the radar. Time was accumulated as integer numbers of tenths of a second. Thus, 100 tenths equals 10 seconds. However, the arithmetic was done in binary, not in decimal. If finite precision is used, there is always a rounding error in the binary representation of 1/10th. The timing error that results from the truncated expansion of 1/10th is directly proportional to the integer number of tenths. When the [Patriot] system operates for more than a few hours this error is appreciable.

"In this particular case, the system operated for 100 hours, or 3,600,000 tenths of a second. Computer arithmetic with 24 bits was used for floating point calculations. A 24-bit word contains a sign bit, and exponent and a significand. Precision refers to the number of bits in the significand. Precision 20 results in an error of about two raised to the minus-23 power in the binary representation of 1/10th. One-tenth is written as a binary expansion 0.0011001100110011001101100 ... there truncation error is about two raised to the minus-23 power at precision 20. The difference between the expansion truncated at precision 20 is exactly 0.8 times two to the minus-23 power. The floating point calculation is in error by 3,600,000 times 0.8 times two to the minus-23, or 0.343322 ..., about 1/3 second. This error caused a shift of about 700 meters in the [radar's] range gate (1/3 second times 2,000 meters per second, the terminal velocity of the Scud) that was sufficient for the radar detection logic to fail to identify and flag the incoming Scud as a missile that should be engaged."

In other words, the crew manning the Patriot system should have turned the dang thing off and then back on from time to time.

Anyway, now you know. Watch out for falling rocks. —Chuck Hawkins, editor

A Reminder ... Keith William Nolan is making great progress on the battle history of Ripcord, thanks to many, many of you who have given him your stories and support. Keep up the good work. If you haven't gotten in touch with Keith to give him a hand with your view of the battle, don't delay, call him soon at: 314-645-1867.

Ripcord Report is a publication of the Battle of FSB Ripcord Association, and is the authoritative voice of history of the battle. Comments, letters and articles

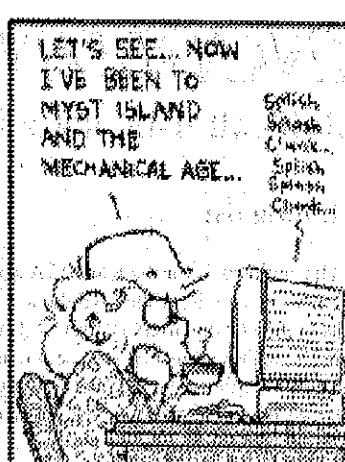
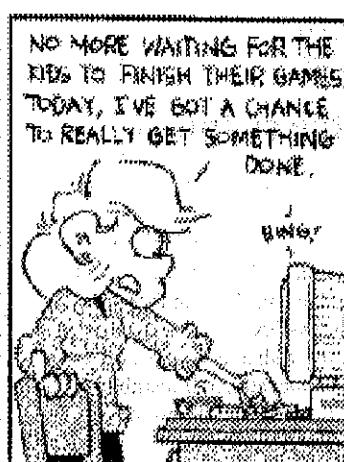
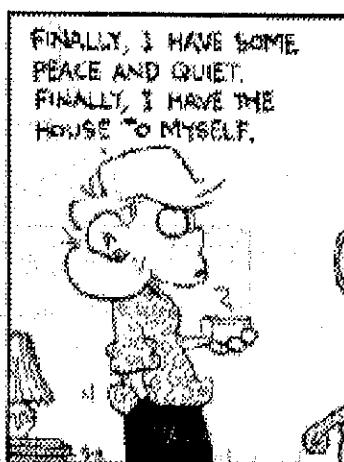
Recent Financial Supporters

With the sincere hope that we haven't forgotten anyone, here's a list of those who gave the newsletter much needed financial aid in recent months. Thanks, guys, and a tip of the Currahee Steel Pot to each of you!

Frank Marshall (A/2-506)
Lloyd Rahlf (HHC, 3d Bde.)
Bob Nelson (HHC/2-319 Arty.)
Don Donner (friend of Randy Thompson, D/1-506)
Wayne Sinks (Mortars, E/2-506)
Paul Burkey (C/2-506)
Bob Seitz (Recon, E/2-506)
Martin Glennon (HHC/2-506)
Joseph Shepherd (father of Tom Shepherd, C/2-506)
Keith William Nolan (author)
Vincent Kenyon (friend, Army veteran)
Tex Turner (HHC, 3d Bde.)
Bob Judd (B/2-506)
Doug Quick (C/2-17 Cav.)
Roger Black (D/1-506)
Gary Watrous (Recon, E/2-506)
Charlie Devlin (friend, 2/501, WWII)
John Smith (D/1-506)
John Schuelke (D/2-501)
Gary Radford (D/2-506)
John Palm (father of Terry Palm, D/2-501)

Ripcord Reunion '97 ... Mobile, Alabama ... October 16-19

Details to be mailed to each association member in July-August.



LZ Dumfries

DUMFRIES, Va.—Hackers, geeks, computer nerds, what's the world coming to? I'd say it's coming unraveled at its digital knees. For example, there was a time when getting a letter in the mail meant something. It was an anticipated event, a big deal. Like when we were kids and the postman brought a letter from grandma and grandpa ... all the way from Pennsylvania! Today, however, what the postman delivers to your mail box is termed "snail mail" by the digital crowd. That's because computers and modern communications links provide a faster means of sending letters. It's called "e-mail," for electronic mail. Now, in many cases, e-mail is a "good thing." It's fast, relatively cheap (once you amortize the cost of your computer and deduct it as a business expense from your taxes), and fairly reliable. But it doesn't have the heft and "feel" of regular mail. And forget about original signatures and stylish envelopes and letterhead. Creativity goes out the window where digital mail is concerned.

Nevertheless, a number of us have "gone digital" recently, if not long previously. Ray Blackman (D/2-501), Bob Seitz (Recon, 2/506), Bruce McCorkle (D/2-506), Herb Koenigsbauer (HHC/2-506), Mike (M-60) Kelley (D/1-502), Bob Nelson (HHC/2-319), Ben Harrison (HHC, 3d Bde.), and many others have e-mail addresses. Keith Nolan, who had not experienced e-mail prior to starting research on the Ripcord battle history, is now a convert. He started using his wife's e-mail address, but began getting so many messages that he created his own (KWNolan@aol.com).

There's a downside to e-mail. First, as with the stuff the postman delivers, there is junk mail that one has to deal with. But that's fairly easy, just press "delete" and away it goes, into the cyber trash can. Then there's those gawd-awful large files ... you know, the ones that grow to megabyte size. If you're putting along with a 14.4 kilobaud modem (as I am now, which I once thought was blazing fast), then uploading or downloading large files can take foreveeeeeeee! And, because we tend to be in a hurry in our digital lives, any delay for whatever reason becomes simply unacceptable. The answer: more and faster technology!



In addition, modern computer and communications technology hasn't really made us more productive, it's made us less so by making life more complicated. Used to be you picked up a pen and a piece of paper, sat down, wrote your letter, addressed the envelope, put a stamp on it and posted it. Simple. Nowadays, you worry about the type font, font size, bold or italic, margins, hanging indents, tables, graphics, columns, line spacing, etc., etc., ad nauseam. And if, at a crucial moment, the computer should "lock up" for whatever reason ... kiss your data goodbye, brother, and reboot and start over.

I upgraded my system last year. Which is to say I bought a brand-new Pentium-based machine, because one doesn't upgrade a 10-year-old 8088-based computer ... hahaha. Yep, that's what I'd been using. And it worked, at least it did pretty much everything I thought I wanted it to do. But with the new system ... woooo boy! ... I've got fancy fonts and laser printers and CD-ROM and access to the Internet and the World Wide Web, not to mention e-mail. Do I get more done? Nope. But it seems like I spend more time doing things ... like looking for lost files, or "surfing the Web" for that elusive piece of data that I could probably find in an encyclopedia, or changing font sizes so the newsletter looks purty.

Still and all, I reckon computers and such are here to stay, and we probably ought to get used to the idea. On the other hand, it's kind of hard to imagine a yak herder in Mongolia sitting on his pony with a laptop and surfing the Web ... but you never know. —Chuck Hawkins, editor

P.S., a future issue of Ripcord Report will feature names and addresses of all the association members. This is for use by association members only, and if you don't want your name listed, let me know. The Ripcord Association list is not sold or provided to so-called list brokers or dealers. For those who would like to have their e-mail address listed, please contact me at: hawkins@bellatlantic.net, and let me know.

He conquers who endures. —Persius, 34-62 A.D.

INCOMING

Mail call from across the country.

Mailing list

The enclosed is for the Ripcord Association.

For your records, while I would be proud to have been in B Battery, I was in the Headquarters Battery, 2/319th Artillery.

If it is within your rules, please provide me with a mailing list of Ripcord members via e-mail at reifm@worldnet.att.net, if possible, or otherwise by mail and on a disk. I can open MS Word, WordPerfect, and anything else that they can open.

Keep up the good work.

Many thanks,

Bob Nelson

Mountlake Terrace, Wash.

Blood on the bales

Two things I would like to share with you, reference John Clyde "Pops" Hedrick's remarks that "after he found out the Michelin Rubber Plantation continued to trade with the North Vietnamese during the war." I was stationed at Dan Pieng, RVN, from Oct. 65-Oct. 66, and the Michelin Rubber Plantation was an area of operations for one year, including the village of Dan Pieng. The Michelin Rubber Plantation was an active plantation, and it comprised 32 hamlets, and was the scene of some of the most horrific battles ever fought in the Vietnam War. The massacre of the 7th ARVN Regt. occurred on Thanksgiving Day, 1965, and was one of many battles fought in the plantation.

The rubber bales, 700-900 pounds each, were shipped up the river to Saigon by sampan and it took a few days to get to the port of Saigon. Then, the crude rubber bales were shipped to France where they were made into Michelin tires. Those bales had a lot of blood on them, including our soldiers and South Vietnamese. The 1st Infantry Division later ploughed parts of the plantation. Today, the rubber factory is still producing raw rubber and I imagine the French have maintained a presence there. I would like to drop John "Pops" Hedrick a line. I need his address.

Mike Womack's story sure brings back some memories, too. Even considering my own loss of memory about a lot of events, his story certainly brings some forgotten events even closer. Also, the Ripcord book, hopefully will be a great success, and I'll do what I can.

The *Ripcord Report* is great. Keep those stories and information coming. It is most interesting and hopefully the association will grow. Sincerely, airborne/air assault, Lloyd Rahlf (SGM, ret.) Sparks, Nev.

Beat Navy!

Wish I could have been with you guys at the last reunion! Sounds like a good time was had by all! Wish I could have been there in person to hear General Randy House's talk! Thanx for reproducing it in the *Ripcord Report*.

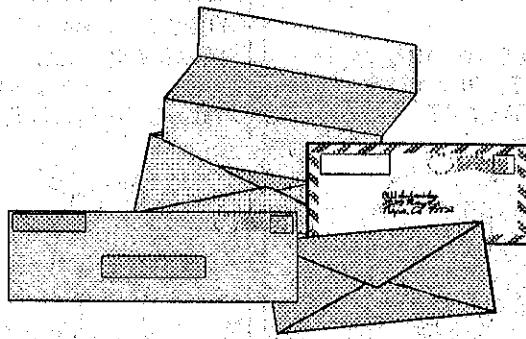
Keep up the good work! The newsletter provides a great service for all the magnificent soldiers who lost so much in that damn war!

Warm regards,

Tex Turner

Williamsburg, Va.

P.S., BEAT NAVY, again!



Popular myth debunked

Thanks much for the latest issue of *Ripcord Report*. Particularly enjoyed the follow-up on Gary Radford's long overdue revisit to Hill 1000. Now I know his effort was at least partially successful; hope that brings him some peace.

Was there any news coverage of his odyssey? Thought perhaps he'd be accompanied by a camera crew and/or writer. I'm sure he found some relief in actually finding evidence where he thought it should be found. I know I would. Certainly would like to return to the hill where I was hit. Spend some time with the ghosts, much like William Manchester did in *Goodbye Darkness*. Mostly, I'd just like to see if the place matches my memory.

Great news on Keith William Nolan tackling the Ripcord story! Nolan seems adept at delivering the unvarnished truth and I look up to everything the man writes.

I have two articles scheduled for publication. "The Three Walls Behind The Wall: The Myth of Vietnam Veteran Suicide" is scheduled for VVA's *Veteran Magazine* I know not when. I'm told it's a done deal, however. "The Search for the Family of Bob Hein & Other Amazing Stories" has been tentatively picked up by *Vietnam Magazine*. Unfortunately, Harry Summers tells me there's such a backlog it might be two years before it reaches ink, and no guarantee of even that!

"Walls" attacks the popular myth that more VN vets have committed suicide than were KIA. In fact, it is now not uncommon to find references that will tell you 150,000 are suicide victims. I got sick of it and decided to mount an offensive. My research is fairly conclusive that a range of from 7,500 to 12,000 may have self-destructed. Strong evidence suggests that the actual number is even less than 7,500, and the VN vet suicide rate only slightly higher than that of the same age group in the U.S. over the same period. Strictly an urban myth of gigantic proportions!

The "Hein" article follows the amazing sequence of coincidence and unlikely reunions that shadowed my involvement in the Calif. VN Vets Memorial effort. Quite a story and many are skeptical that it's true, but it is, every bit of it.

Again, thanks. First Strike! Mike (M-60) Kelley Sacramento, Calif.

Ripcord book

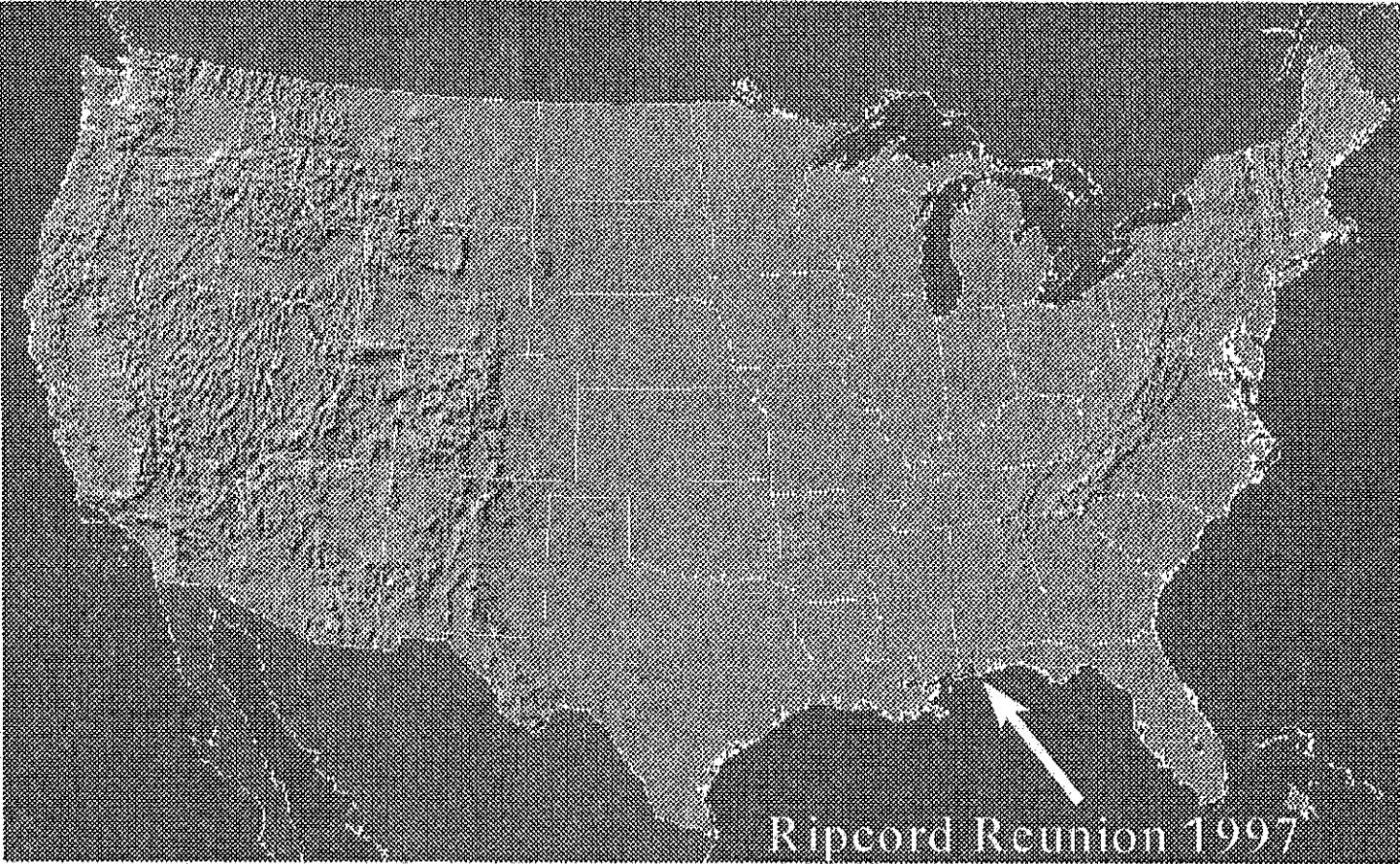
Thanks so much in getting Keith William Nolan to write the Ripcord battle history. I think he'll do a fine job. I'll help all I can.

Regards,

John Palm

Lutz, Fla.

Editor's note: John's son, Terry (D/2-501), was killed on Hill 805.



Ripcord Reunion 1997

More Incoming ...

Update from Delta Raiders

Just got the winter issue. Terrific!

I'm in the process of putting a Delta Raider's (D/2-501) on-line address list together so I can print it in the next issue of our newsletter. I've heard from several Raider and associate members already! Can I print your e-mail address for *Ripcord Report* in our next issue?

What's this? A book about Ripcord? I think the whole story MUST be told regardless of who does it. Send more info! If Mr. Nolan would like detailed information on our little piece of the Ripcord (Hill 805) story, let me know. Sorry, Hill 805 sticks in my mind because of how bad it was, but we were out there off and on pretty much from the beginning, and for one mission afterward. At any rate, we'll help all we can.

Our book ... the photo historical chronology of Delta Company ... is finally well under way. I'll keep you informed as to its progress as time goes by. Our next reunion will be hosted by Chris Straub in the D.C. AO during the summer of 1998. I don't know how much of the planning he has done yet, but I think there will be quite a good turn out. I'd love to see all located Raiders meet at The Wall.

Airmobile,

Ray (Blackie) Blackman

Valparaiso, Neb.

Two Currahees meet on Capitol Hill

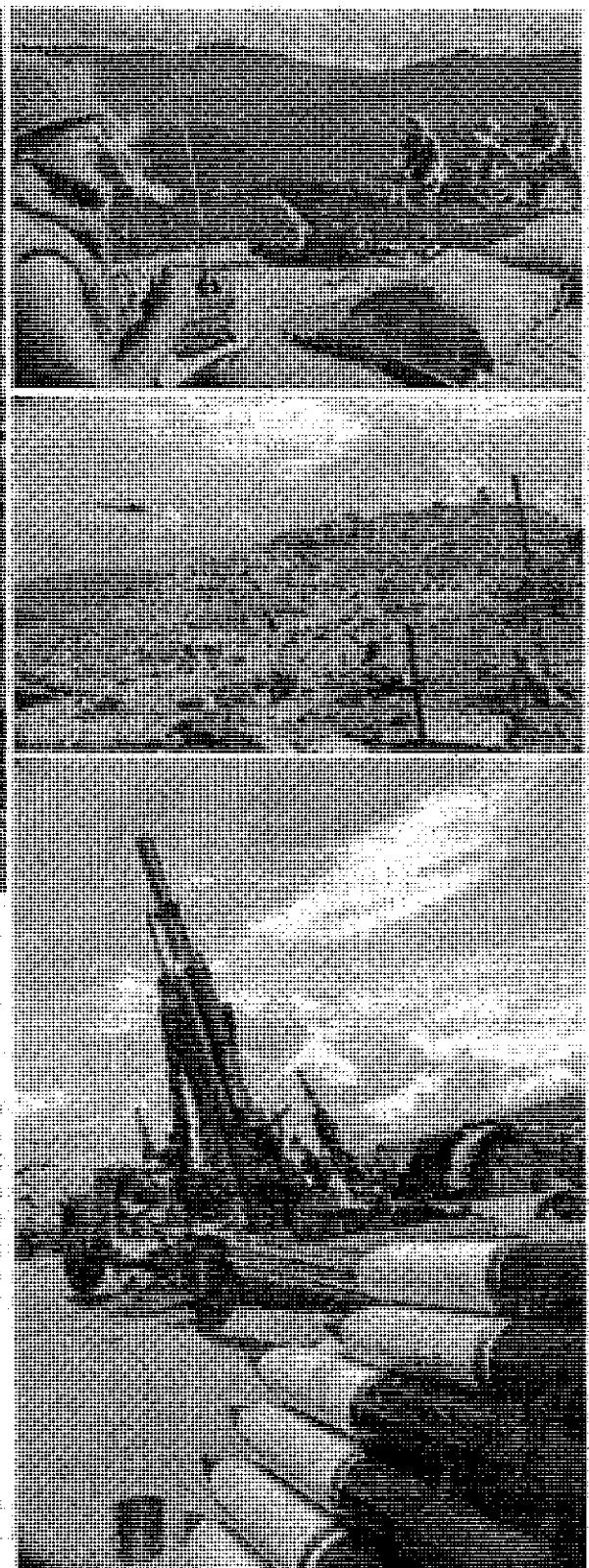
In February 1997, two members of the 2/506th Currahees met for the first time in 26 years in the halls of the United States Congress. This was not an informal meeting, but occurred during the rather formal Department of Defense appropriations hearings held by the House of Representatives Committee on National Security.

Maj. Gen. Randy House, formerly a flight platoon leader with C/158th Aviation Battalion (Phoenix) and later company commander of C/2-506th Inf., was at the hearing providing testimony on the military construction planning for the U.S. Army. Randy is now the Army's assistant chief of staff for installation management.

Representative Allen Boyd, a newly-elected congressman from Florida and former platoon leader in B/2-506th, was one of the members on the Committee for National Security listening to the testimony.

Congressman Allen Boyd took the opportunity to address the entire committee, remarking that we often cross paths with American heroes without knowing it, and that Maj. Gen. Randy House was one of these true American heroes. Allen stated that he and Randy had served together in the 2/506th Infantry Battalion in 1970-71, and recounted a day from the war when Randy distinguished himself in the protection of his company.

Allen and Randy have made plans to get together with other Currahees in the Washington, D.C., area, this time in an informal setting!—Bob Seitz, McLean, Va.



Full-Size Ripcord Poster (21" x 26") ... Price: \$40

This is a glossy, photo-quality, black and white poster, suitable for framing. A composite of pictures taken during the siege of FSB Ripcord by Army photographers, you can order yours from: Chris Jensen, 12700 Lake Ave., Apt. 2902, Lakewood, Ohio 44107. Price includes shipping and handling. Proceeds go to the Ripcord Association.

Units and offices located at Camp Evans, RVN, as of January 1, 1970

HHC, 3d Brigade	A/2-17th Cavalry	D/14th Engineers	Installation Engineer, PA&E
1/506th Infantry	Air Force Controller	SERTS	Base Defense Office
2/506th Infantry	287th EOD	101st MP Plt.	158th Aviation
3/187th Infantry	58th Scout Dog Plat.	4/77th ARA	Base Development Office
2/319th Artillery	B/37th Signal	359th ASP	555th Maintenance
B/326th Engineers	148th S&S Det.	666th Transportation	571st Ordnance
C/326th Medical	2/94th Artillery		

This listing courtesy of Lloyd Rahlf (SGM, ret.)

Guest Editorial

Reprinted from: Armed Forces Journal INTERNATIONAL, May 1997

Unequal Partners

Today's "Total Army" includes eight National Guard divisions. This substantial slice of America's combat power is in addition to the National Guard's 15 "enhanced readiness brigades" that presumably would be used to augment active duty forces in the event of an all-out national emergency. But those eight divisions haven't attracted much attention during the nearly completed Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), since they're not even included in America's war plans.

Ever since the contentious issue of Georgia's 48th Infantry (Mechanized) Brigade's purported inability to achieve ready-for-deployment status during Desert Storm, Army planners have shied away from relying on National Guard combat units to augment active-duty Army forces during the early stages of a conflict. In spite of the special attention the Army continues to devote to its enhanced brigades in order to keep them at relatively acceptable levels of combat readiness, they still remain far from the tip of the spear in the service's deployment plans. But at least those enhanced brigades do come into play at some point during Army warfighting planning sessions. The same can't be said of the eight National Guard divisions.

In the wake of the "come-as-you-are" planning assumptions that flowed from the Bottom-Up Review's short-notice, two-MRC (major regional contingency) strategy, those eight divisions were deemed so unlikely to be ready to deploy in time to make a difference in the conflicts the Army would most likely face that they were

quietly flushed from Army war plans. The plug was pulled more than five years ago, when former Army Chief of Staff Gen. Gordon Sullivan told the House Armed Services Committee that it would take 365 days to prepare a National Guard division for deployment to a combat arena. After the howls of protest from National Guard leaders subsided, the Army revised its estimate downward to 270 days. But that three-month chop by the Army headquarters staff did little to assuage the Guard's leadership. Even a nine-month mobilization, training and deployment cycle, they argued, was blatantly pessimistic and would continue to exclude National Guard divisions from the Army's warfighting planning process.

Enter Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs Deborah Lee. At her direction, early last year the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA) was told to conduct a comprehensive inquiry to determine how long it would take to get the most complex type of division in the National Guard forces structure ready to deploy for combat. The Texas National Guard's 49th Armored Division was selected as the test unit, and the actual readiness conditions prevailing in the 49th were used in establishing the study's baseline.

Drawing on the expertise of officers from HQDA and the Army's Training and Doctrine Command, Forces Command and other appropriate organizations, a seven-month study began last July. Using relatively conservative planning assumptions for such things as availability of training

areas and the amount of training support that could be expected from active-duty Army elements, the IDA-led inquiry determined that the 49th Division could achieve a validated readiness status in 94 days and could get to either a port of debarkation or an airhead in 132 days.

Not surprisingly, when these conclusions made their way to the Army staff early this year, they created more than a bit of heartburn. As things now stand, active-duty Army officials believe that the study results are probably flawed because—get this—the active Army probably wouldn't be able to deliver the types of training and other support that the active Army is supposed to provide to the National Guard during the mobilization process. They're not sure, though, since there is no standard procedure for validating the readiness status of a National Guard division; in fact, there's no Army field manual that lays out the process by which a division is supposed to mobilize and prepare for deployment.

It's ironic that while most elements of America's military force structure would like nothing better than to find a place to hide during QDR deliberations, the Army National Guard is crying out for attention. But some National Guard officials clearly feel that years of benign neglect have put their divisions in a perilous position for QDR-prompted cuts. With the IDA-led study results in hand, these officials vow, they aren't about to disappear quietly.

CONFIDENTIAL

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
Headquarters 2d Battalion (Airmobile) 506th Infantry
APO San Francisco 96383

AVDG-CC-C

16 November 1970

SUBJECT: Combat Operations After Action Report, Operation JEFFERSON GLEN (U)

Commanding Officer
3d Bde, 101st Abn Div (Ambl)
ATTN: S-3
APO 96383

1. (C) Name of Operation: JEFFERSON GLEN

2. (C) Date of Operation: 13 November 1970

3. (C) Location: YD587251

4. (C) Reporting Officer: John C Bard, LTC, Infantry, Commanding

5. (C) General Description of Activities: D/2-506th Inf was on a PZ waiting for extraction to be air lifted to another field location. There were sixty-four (64) personnel in the company at the time.

6. Significant Event: At 0730 hours D/2-506th Inf started moving west from NDP site at YD373252 to PZ site at YD387251. Third platoon moved first followed by second platoon, the first platoon and CP remained behind to evacuate 1LT _____. The entire company was closed on the PZ by 0830 hours. The company was broken down into chalk loads and were standing by for extraction. The men were spread out around the edge of the PZ in perimeter. OPs were placed 20-30 meters to east and 20-30 meters to the west. At approximately 1055 hours the enemy initiated fire with a burst of automatic weapons fire from the east approximately 30-50 meters from the PZ. At the same time the enemy fired 2 RPGs from the southeast. The enemy continued automatic weapons and small arms fire and fired a total of 4-6 RPGs with 2 or 3 hitting the PZ and 1 or 2 hitting trees and exploding. D/2-506 immediately returned fire, notified the TOC of contact, requested a white team and requested an urgent medevac. The artillery forward observer requested a fire mission proximity 350 meters to the east, platoon adjust and fire for effect. Enemy fire lasted 3-5 minutes. The white team worked 200 meters to the east and then to the southeast and south. The OP to the east saw no movement prior to enemy fire. The majority of the wounded were sitting around the edge of the PZ in the open. The 2 killed in action were standing together talking and were killed with the first burst of small arms fire. The medevac was on station after the contact and evacuated 7 wounded the first time and four the second. Results of the contact were 16 US/WIA and 2 US/KIA and 1 ARVN artillery FO who later died as a result of wounds received in this contact.

7. (C) Lessons Learned: There were no new lessons learned as a result of this contact.

8. (C) Commander's Analysis: D Co's contact was a classic example of what can happen when the ground commander is lax. The company was on a PZ awaiting extraction. Troops were bunched, inadequate security was posted, and the company commander and his radio operator were separated. This was the situation for at least 2 hours prior to the contact. The enemy was able to fire small arms at a close range and the 2-5 RPG rounds fired burst near the troops sitting or standing on the PZ. The casualties were predictable but avoidable. The company commander has been relieved and no new lessons have been learned. Keeping security posted and not bunching up on PZs have been reemphasized to all commanders.

FOR THE COMMANDER

S H WRIGHTSON JR
CPT INF
Adjutant

The RTO's analysis of the action

By Bruce McCorkle (D/2-506)

HUDSON, Ohio—Thank you for the after action report for the Friday, the 13th debacle. I've never seen an after action report before, and, not being a professional soldier, am somewhat taken aback by the matter-of-fact nature of the report. However accurate, by isolating the facts of the event from the accompanying fear, adrenaline and disappointment, it almost seems to me to be describing something that happened somewhere else to someone else.

As a result of that day's action, I feel that I inappropriately received the Bronze Star with V. By coincidence, the notice of the award appeared in my hometown newspaper in August 1971—on a Friday the 13th.

Regarding medals, I had an early morning ceremony by myself at Boomer Lake in Oklahoma and threw away all of my medals, except the CIB which I feel that I earned. Two years ago I felt compelled to contact the Army and they were kind enough to send replacement medals. I feel okay about having them and telling my children a little bit about Vietnam.

In reflecting on the 13th, several things come to mind:

1. Was our location compromised by the medevac which extracted St. Ong? If so, the inappropriate anger of an officer who stabbed himself in the knee was a contributing factor.

2. Because of the rains, we had been in that particular NDP for several days—something Rollison (the previous company commander) would never have allowed. With him, we moved every day. I wonder if this didn't give the NVA a much better opportunity to "stake us out."

3. When the medevac asked me if we were in a quiet AO, I accurately reported that we had seen no activity for several weeks. As I recall, based on my report, they extracted 1st Lt. _____ with no gunship cover. I am grateful that they were not shot down because of my misinformation. The same crew came out to help us after the firefight and the pilot reminded me of my remarks earlier in the day ... "so this is your quiet AO?"

4. Although my ruck took a direct hit from a RPG (there was a cylinder-shaped piece of metal about 1.5 inches in diameter and 4 inches long in my "P" box), the radio remained functional.

5. I would have been killed had I not disobeyed an order. I have since learned to trust my instincts. I told the company commander that I was going to go to the river to get some water. He said, "No, we don't know when the birds are coming in." He moved away (to play cards, I guess) and I saw a Kit Carson scout head to the river. I don't recall ever disobeying an order before, but for some reason I did. I told my junior RTO to monitor the radio because I was going to take a leak. I rolled up my 5 quart and put it in my pocket and went to the river. I was wading back across the LZ (in the open like an idiot) when we were hit. You know the feeling ... you hear a sound way over there but your feel stuff whizzing around you. To me it feels like being electrocuted. I returned fire, ran out of ammo and had left my bandoleers with my ruck (like a cherry). Expecting a ground assault, I crawled off the LZ, worked my way around near my ruck and met up with the CO. His weapon was jammed. I had no ammo, so I gave him mine and he covered me as I crawled out to my ruck. Yes, it was on the edge of the LZ, in the open. My junior RTO had a minor wound. I called TOC and requested a white team and dustoff. The CO moved around the LZ and I didn't see him again until after we were extracted. I was the only one in contact with TOC.

6. I have always felt that, in many ways, I let the CO down and did not give him the kind of support that Rick gave Rollison. I regret that I was not a better soldier and friend.

So it goes. We all make mistakes.

I'm not sure why I'm saying all this, but apparently I needed to unload some baggage I've been carrying around for awhile. Thanks for listening.



Medevac on a mission in 3d Bde., 101st Abn. Div. AO, Vietnam, July 1970. U.S. Army photo.

RIPCORD REPORT

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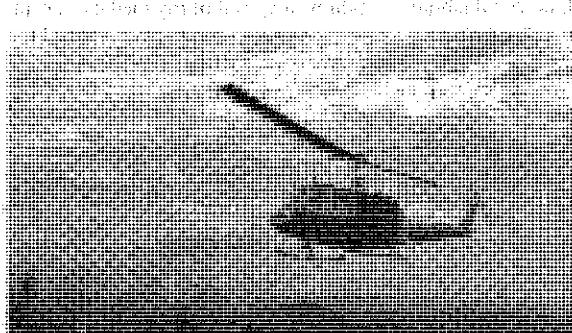
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1. *What is the meaning of the word 'spirit'?*

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