



DIVISION HISTORY [VIETNAM]

Most of our Ripcord Association members were in the 101st Airborne (Airmobile) Division starting in late 1969 or early 1970. I thought it might be of interest to learn the Vietnam history of our division before most of us arrived in country.

The events and operations that are layed out in order of occurrence have been compiled from the division history featured in publications such as the 1968 and 1969 yearbooks.

The first operation is Eagle Thrust and ends with operation Kentucky Jumper. I have also listed: Spoils, Awards and those killed. This is a general account of the two years. It doesn't include every action by every Battalion or Company. But, it does give you the overall Division plan.

Also, with the release of the movie "**Hamburger Hill**" the 101st is beginning to receive some public notice. I have enclosed an article written by Col. Harry Summers of the **Los Angeles Times**. It was clipped out of the Friday, September 4, 1987 **Arizona Republic** newspaper. I found both this article and the movie very interesting.

Currahee,
Bill Heath
"A" 2/506th Inf.



OPERATION CARENTAN I

Continuing the fight for the area around Hue, Division Paratroopers teamed with Airborne Infantrymen of the 3rd Brigade, 82nd Abn. Div., to launch Operation Carentan I. The campaign was directed against insurgents in Thua Thien province, north of Camp Eagle, the new forward base camp. It succeeded through a series of cordons and night ambushes.

The initial assault March 8 included "All Americans" from the 82nd, and members of B Trp., 2nd Sqd., 17th Cav., and F Co., 58th Inf. (LRRP). Screaming Eagles from the 2nd Brigade rejoined the Division after participating in Operation Jeb Stuart near Quang Tri City. Two days after the start of Carentan, A Co., 1st Bn., 501st Abn. Inf. uncovered a pair of large weapons caches, while Paratroopers from C Co., 2nd Bn., 501st Abn. Inf. killed 25 enemy in a contact with a NVA company.

Before the end of Carentan's first week, C Co. had killed 41 more enemy in a two-day battle three miles north of Hue. Meanwhile, Screaming Eagles from the 1st Brigade's 2nd Bn., 327th Abn. Inf. charged with the responsibility of clearing Route 547 from the Hue to Fire Base Bastogne, killed 25 enemy soldiers, who were fighting from bunker positions along the road.

Late in the evening of March 21, members of the 2nd Bn., 501st Abn. Inf. repulsed an attack on their night defensive position, sometimes resorting to direct artillery fire to kill 22 enemy. The next day, gunships of the 101st Avn. Bn. caught a NVA company in the open five miles west of Hue and killed 34, while a light fire team destroyed three sampans, resulting in nine more enemy deaths.

Sweeps by the 1st Bn., 501st Abn. Inf. accounted for 57 enemy killed in two days of fighting, while D Co., 2nd Bn., 501st Abn. Inf. found 31 NVA killed in previous fighting in their area of operation.

When the operation ended March 31, 861 enemy had been killed. Weapons and munitions captured included 186 individual and crew-served weapons, 1,027 rocket, mortar and artillery rounds, 41,000 small arms rounds and 45 grenades. Paratroopers also kept nearly

17 tons of rice and grain from the enemy.

OPERATION CARENTAN II

Carentan I terminated on March 31, with the launching of Operation Carentan II. The new operation was conducted in the same area, northwest from the coastal plains; south from Hue, due west to the A Shau Valley.

Operation Carentan II proved to be a testing point for the Screaming Eagles. North Vietnamese regulars challenged Paratroop forces almost daily. The normal tactic of hit and run was absent from the enemy's fighting strategy. The Screaming Eagles passed their test defeating the enemy units. Those who wear the Eagle on their shoulder were to be avoided.

The mission of Carentan II was to continue driving hostile forces from the area around Hue, and to begin clearing operations toward the A Shau Valley for a possible future raid into that area. The first major battle occurred on the famous "Street without Joy". The 2nd Squadron, 17th Airborne Cavalry began sweeping the area destroying bunker complexes and other fortifications that had long been NVA strongholds. Assisting in the "Street" sweep were 2nd Brigade troopers from the 2nd Bn., 501st Abn. Inf. A sweep of the Phong Dien Village after a night cordon and artillery bombardment resulted in 66 enemy dead.

During the same period, other 2nd Brigade troopers were completing a week-long reconnaissance-in-force along the Song Bo River, three miles northwest of Hue. Army aviation, artillery, tactical air, and the airborne troopers combined to kill 200 enemy and capture 44 weapons.

Another cordon operation around the village of Dong Xuyen, three miles north of Hue, netted paratroopers from the 1st Bn., 501st Abn. Inf., 53 enemy killed in three days of bitter fighting.

Meanwhile, "Always First" troopers from the 1st Brigade launched Operation Delaware west of Camp Eagle.

OPERATION DELAWARE

In what was termed "one of the 101st's toughest missions in Vietnam", Operation Delaware was initiated by troopers of the 1st Brigade on April 19. The primary mission was to provide a blocking force for the 1st Air Cavalry assault into the A Shau Valley and to interdict enemy supply routes along Highway 547 and 547A

was again uncovering enemy caches. In a cache three miles southwest of FB Veghel, a fleet of 54 enemy trucks was discovered and destroyed in place.

At 12:30 a.m. on May 21, a NVA battalion, augmented by personnel from a sapper demolition team, launched a daring ground attack against Camp Eagle, following a covering barrage of more than 400 rounds of 122 mm rockets, 82 mm mortars, B-40 and B-41 rocket-grenades into the Division headquarters area. The ground attack struck the southwest edge of the perimeter and was beaten back by headquarters troops of the 1st Brigade, members of the 2/506th and helicopter gunships.

At dawn a sweep of the area revealed 54 enemy bodies and 16 individual weapons captured. Also seized were 40 satchel charges, 30 bangalore torpedoes, and 50 RPG rounds. Damage to the base area was light.

Rice denial dominated the actions of Nevada Eagle during the lull in enemy contact. For the period covering May 17 to July 18, Screaming Eagle units from the 1st and 2nd Brigades captured over 325 tons of enemy-held rice.

In mid-July, the Division welcomed a new commander, Maj. Gen. Melvin Zais.

While Nevada Eagle was continuing, the 2/506th and 2/327th made an air-mobile combat assault into the A Shau Valley, the NVA's stronghold west of Hue. Designed to cut off supply-routes from the west, the operation began with an airlift of two battalions from the 1st Brigade. The next day two battalions of the 1st ARVN Div. air-assaulted into the area secured by the 2/327th near TaBat airfield.

The paratroopers met scattered contact throughout the operation. Two bitter tastes of allied power, first by the ARVN units and then by the 1/327th discouraged any future contacts.

On August 21, the allied troops were airlifted from the valley floor. During the 17 day operation, 181 NVA were killed and four taken prisoner. The Screaming Eagles also captured 58 individual and crew-served weapons.

As the paratroopers left the picturesque valley, the NVA sanctuary was a shambles. Base camps were destroyed, roads obliterated and caches uncovered. The remaining NVA were left in a valley

ringed with artillery and littered with mine fields to discourage its future tactical value.

As Operation Nevada Eagle continued, a 10-day-battle of Vinh Loc was fought with close coordination between allied units. During that time 153 enemy were killed, 178 individual and crew-served weapons captured and 370 prisoners taken, of which 126 were identified as members of the local Viet Cong infrastructure. In addition, 56 Hoi Chanh rallied to the South Vietnamese Government and 139 enemy soldiers volunteered for the ARVN forces.

The Division's lone southern brigade rejoined the Screaming Eagles in I Corps. They soon deployed to Camp Evans as the 1st Air Cav. Div. moved south to another area.

With all the Screaming Eagles fighting together for the first time in the same operation, enemy units continued to avoid contact with the searching paratroopers. The lull in fighting aided units in continuing their civil affairs projects and the PsyOps efforts.

The increased emphasis in the Hoi Chanh program brought the Screaming Eagle teams 231 ralliers during the month of September and a record of 251 ralliers in October.

On February 28, 1969 Operation Nevada Eagle ended, bringing to a conclusion one of the most successful campaigns in division history. In 288 days of action in the coastal lowlands of Thua Thien Province Screaming Eagles had destroyed 3,299 enemy and captured 798 VC and 55 NVA. Another 714 Communists rallied under the Chieu Hoi program. Enough weapons had been captured to equip nine enemy battalions. The operation badly hurt the enemy's logistic base as 668 tons of rice were captured, enough to feed ten enemy battalions for one year. This forced the VC and NVA to retreat to their sanctuaries and resupply areas in and around the A Shau Valley.

The stage was set.

(END PART ONE.)

PART TWO

KENTUCKY JUMPER

In March 1969, Operation Kentucky Jumper began and Screaming Eagles returned to the A Shau Valley for the first time since their daring raid into this communist sanctuary the previous August. But this time the assault would be merely the first of hundreds. This was not a raid; Screaming Eagles would not leave the valley until the enemy's supply lines had been cut, his caches uncovered and his base camps leveled. The A Shau would become Screaming Eagle country.

For the men of the 101st the A Shau was a place with a strange mystique. Here in March of 1966 the Special Forces-GIDG camps at A Luci, Ta Bat and then A Shau had been closed as the VC/NVA drove the allies from the valley. Then, for two years, the valley belonged to the communists who openly shipped tons of supplies down their own highway, Route 548, running down the length of the A Shau. In May of 1968 the 1st Cav. Div. (Ambl.) aided by the 101st's 1st Brigade, probed with men and machines into the green lushness and then pulled out. The valley returned to the communists until August when the 101st's Operation Somerset Plain brought Screaming Eagles into the valley again for a 17-day raid. But again the area was returned to the communists.

In March 1969, when the Screaming Eagles set out to conquer the A Shau, they knew the struggle would be a difficult one. In 167 days, three operations would be conducted under Kentucky Jumper. The first of these was Operation Massachusetts Striker.

ONE: MASSACHUSETTS STRIKER

On March 22, 1969 the assault on the communist-dominated A Shau Valley got off to what at first seemed a faltering start. The men of the 326th Engr. Bn. (Ambl.) had constructed Fire Base Whip near the southern end of the valley, but bad weather prevented its resupply or use as a marshalling point. A planned combat assault into the valley was made on abandoned Fire Base Veghel instead, the farthest point west that could be reached. But as men of the NO SLACK 2/327th Inf. assaulted into the fire base, they came under heavy fire. Lt.

Col. Donald Davis, Brooklyn, N.Y., battalion commander, radioed back the situation.

"It seems," he said, "that we've accidentally jumped into a battalion base area."

At five in the afternoon Charlie Co., 1st Bn. (Ambl.), 502nd Inf. reinforced the No Slack troopers although the helicopters met heavy fire and four out of the first five craft in were hit.

After a night of bitter fighting, the NVA withdrew, leaving 20 of their dead behind. The next day Charlie Co. was joined by the rest of the O-Deuce and the battalion began a drive westward in pursuit. For the next 33 days the men of the O-Deuce pushed the hard-fighting NVA force back until the communists made a stand on Dong A Tay, "Bloody Ridge", where at least 90 NVA were killed and many more wounded.

Meanwhile, also on March 22, men of the 2nd of the 327th became the first 101st troopers on the valley floor itself, assaulting onto the old A Shau airstrip and beginning a drive toward the Laotian border.

At the same time, men of the 2/501st were sweeping in the same direction from the Rao Nai Valley southeast of the A Shau. Almost at once Screaming Eagles began uncovering virtual warehouses of enemy equipment and supplies. On April 20 men of the 1/502nd made an astounding discovery at the northern end of the A Shau, just south of Route 614, the "Yellow Brick Road", uncovering the first few items of what would eventually prove to be a 100 ton cache. Fourteen trucks, 600 new SKS rifles, radios and field telephones and medical supplies were found.

As the allied thrust into the A Shau continued, the engineers blasted long chains of landing zones and fire bases into the surrounding hills and mountains and artillery units rapidly moved in to support the ground troops. The valley that had been a sanctuary for the communist forces since the days of French rule was dramatically transfigured as helicopters roamed the valley and Screaming Eagles pushed through the lush vegetation, seeking out the enemy.

On May 8, 1969, the operation ended after nine weeks of heavy fighting in which 176 enemy were killed and 859 individual and 34 crew-served weapons captured.

But in the A Shau Valley this was only the beginning.

TWO: APACHE SNOW

structures. The NVA had been dealt a stunning defeat.

Maj. Gen. Melvin Zais, then commanding general of the 101st, termed the struggle "a tremendous victory by a bunch of gutty guys".

Twenty days later Operation Apache Snow drew to a close after a month of action in the northern A Shau. Totals had reached 675 enemy killed, three detainees, 241 individual and 40 crew-served weapons captured and more than 100,000 rounds of ammunition discovered. The battle for Hamburger Hill was over.

As the battle for Dong Ap Bia had raged, the 1st Brigade headquarters and two battalions under its operational control, the 1/501st and 1/502nd prepared to relive a chapter of 1st Brigade history by joining the Americal Div. at Tam Ky. Twice before the "Always First" brigade had fought with Task Force Oregon (later designated the Americal Div.) at the battle for Duc Pho and at Chu Lai.

On May 15, 1969, the 1st Brigade again deployed for the Chu Lai - Tam Ky area and Operation Lamar Plain began. The enemy was the NVA 2nd Div. which was threatening the Quang Tin Province Headquarters at Tam Ky.

For 90 days the 1st Brigade troops pushed through thick jungle and blistering 120 degree heat in pursuit of the enemy. And the enemy was abundantly available; on May 21, the Geronimos took hill 270, killing 25 NVA. Throughout the operation, men of the 1st Brigade uncovered hooch and bunker complexes. Some abandoned bunkers had been occupied only the night before.

By late June the NVA were avoiding contact with the 101st and troopers began turning up abandoned supplies. The largest cache found included 29 SKS rifles, 72 AK-47s and one M-1; three 60 mm mortars and thirty-seven 122 mm rounds and numerous blasting caps and mortar fuses. Close by, another cache contained two hundred 82 mm mortar rounds and 78 rocket propelled grenades.

On August 14 the 1st Brigade returned home, having removed the threat to the province headquarters. In the operation 519 enemy had been destroyed and 257 individual and 18 crew-served weapons captured.

THREE: MONTGOMERY RENDEZVOUS

On June 8, 1969, Operation Montgomery Rendezvous began as 3rd Brigade troops air assaulted into the highlands east of the A Shau and began the final stage of the valley's conquest. While the infantry swept the surrounding hills and mountains, Flying Cranes and Chinooks began airlifting in equipment and supplies for the 326th Engr. Bn. (Ambl.) and its largest operation of the Vietnam conflict; the construction of a 1,500 foot runway on the valley floor. In just 54 working hours the pioneer airstrip was carved into the rugged earth near the old Ta Bat airstrip and the first C-7A, Caribou, twin engine transport landed in a cloud of dust.

The 27th Engr. Bn., 18th Engr. Bde., meanwhile completed the final link of a twisting highway, Route 547, leading from Camp Eagle to the A Shau Valley. On June 20, eighty armored personnel carriers of the 3rd Sqdrn., 7th Cav. roared down the newly completed road and became the first armor to roam the lush floor of the A Shau. Later, heavy armor of the Cav. and 2nd Bn., 34th Armor entered the valley, eventually climbing to the top of Dong Ap Bia itself.

Enemy resistance was light and largely confined to futile attacks on Fire Bases Currahee and Berchtesgaden. Although fighting was fierce in these mortar and sapper assaults, the NVA were driven off with the combined loss of 86 communists killed.

When Montgomery Rendezvous ended August 14, Screaming Eagles had progressed far along the road toward taming the A Shau. The new airstrip and road offered troops in the valley double assurance of logistic support while the roar of tanks and armored personnel carriers drove the NVA into hiding. On the operation's last day, enemy opposition had been virtually eliminated. In all, 393 enemy had been killed and 174 individual and 47 crew-served weapons captured.

KENTUCKY JUMPER ENDS.

On the evening of August 14, Operation Kentucky Jumper passed into history after 167 days of action in and around the A Shau Valley. The three operations conducted under Kentucky Jumper, Operations Massachusetts Striker, Apache Snow and Montgomery Rendezvous, completed the A Shau trilogy. The invasion and conquest of the

Popular Force and People's Self Defense Force groups. In keeping with the U.S. policy of Vietnamization, Randolph Glen saw increased responsibility placed on such local groups to control guerilla activity virtually unaided by U.S. or regular troops of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam.

Troops of the 101st, meanwhile, worked more closely with ARVN troops than ever before, helping to assure that the allied successes of the Kentucky Jumper campaign continued.

1969 TOTALS:

SPOILS

Over the calendar year, enough weapons were captured to equip four full NVA battalions. Hundreds of tons of supplies, transported with great difficulty and high cost by the NVA from North Vietnam, would never be used against the men of the 101st Abn.

They included:

56	Vehicles
2,281	Individual Weapons
897,032	Rounds of Small Arms Ammunition
259	Crew-Served Weapons
132,643	Rounds of Crew-Served Weapon Ammunition
144.8	Tons of Rice, Medical Supplies and Communication Equipment

1968 TOTALS:

AWARDS

Medal of Honor	2
Distinguished Service Cross . .	6
Silver Star	514
Distinguished Flying Cross . . .	160
Legion of Merit	28
Bronze Star	10,340
Bronze Star W/"V" Device	1,780
Army Commendation	9,750
Army Commendation S/"V" Device .	1,036

In memory of the Screaming Eagles who sacrificed their lives in Vietnam 1968.

Total of 1,118. (Listed by rank.)

PVT -- 9	1SG -- 5
PFC -- 501	SGM -- 1
SP4 -- 308	
CPL -- 2	WO1 -- 6
SP5 -- 22	2LT -- 24
SGT -- 149	1LT -- 24
SP6 -- 1	CPT -- 8
SSG -- 32	COL -- 2
SFC -- 14	LTC -- 1
PSG -- 9	

The 101st Abn, accounted for more than 7,953 enemy killed in its first year as a complete division.

AWARDS

Medal of Honor	4
Distinguished Service Cross . .	26
Silver Star	636
Distinguished Flying Cross . . .	404
Legion of Merit	54
Bronze Star	19,201
Bronze Star "V" Device	1,908
Army Commendation Medal	28,121
Army Commendation Medal "V" Device	927
Air Medal	13,874
Air Medal "V" Device	612
Soldiers Medal	101
Purple Heart	4,015

KIA -- SCREAMING EAGLES

PVT -- 3	WO1 -- 11
PFC -- 234	CW2 -- 4
SP4 -- 242	2LT -- 7
CPL -- 3	1LT -- 24
SP5 -- 13	CPT -- 17
SGT -- 61	MAJ -- 1
SSG -- 14	LTC -- 2
SFC -- 7	
1SG -- 1	TOTAL: 644

GLOSSARY

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TOP STAMP:

Republic of Vietnam
Postage Stamp — 2 dollars Vietnamese

MIDDLE STAMP:

50 cents Vietnamese
Exercise & Sports
Postage Stamp — Republic of Vietnam

BOTTOM STAMP:

Republic of Vietnam
50 dollars Vietnamese
Chieu-Hoi Stamp "Time To Give Up"
"Shows a Grandmother, Mother &
Child, South Vietnamese Soldier with
'open arms' to a Viet Cong/NVA Soldier
helping him out of the fire and Hell of
war."

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TOP:

United States Military Payment
Certificate (MPC)
25 cents U.S. Front and back photo.

BOTTOM:

Bank of the Republic of Vietnam
1000 dollars Vietnamese

PAGE 11

Bank of the Republic of Vietnam
5 dollars Vietnamese
Left: Front with serial number
Right: Back view.



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Newsletter Intentions

The intention of this Newsletter is to bring those of us together that are interested in FSB Ripcord, RVN. The events, the people, the humor, the memories of that time are being written by those that served there. We want this to be a healthy experience for the Veteran, his or her family or friends. We encourage you to write, call and talk, or send a taped message to us with your feelings about our Newsletter or Ripcord in general. We wish to improve as we grow and your initial input is necessary.

However, there may be those Veterans who are still troubled by their Vietnam experience. We regret this situation, but can not share responsibility for their reactions regarding the Newsletter contents. Ideally, this Newsletter will help all of us through our past and into a rewarding future.

FIND-A-VET*

To have your name listed in the FIND-A-VET* program, a locator service for veterans who served in Vietnam, please fill in the form below.

Name Last _____ First _____ MI _____
 Nickname _____

Current address:
 Street _____ City _____
 State _____ Zip code _____

Military Information:

Military Unit in Vietnam:
 (include Co, Bn, Rgt, Bde, Div, etc)

Branch of Service _____

Years Served IN Vietnam from _____ to _____

Home state at time of service in Vietnam _____

Service # _____

Please circle shoulder patch worn by your unit, if it appears here. If not, you may submit a drawing on back of form.

Return form to:

Tom Sutterfield
 FIND-A-VET*
 P.O. Box 567
 Stone Mountain, GA 30086-0567

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MEDAL OF HONOR

"Andre Cavarro Lucas" . . . Compliments of
Jim Fairhall.

CITATION:

LUCAS, ANDRE C.

Rank and organization: Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Army, 2d Battalion, 506th Infantry, 101st Airborne Division. *Place and date:* Fire Support Base Ripcord, Republic of Vietnam, 1 to 23 July 1970. *Entered service at:* West Point, N.Y. *Born:* 2 October 1930, Washington, D.C. *Citation:* Lt. col. Lucas distinguished himself by extraordinary heroism while serving as the commanding officer of the 2d Battalion. Although the fire base was constantly subjected to heavy attacks by a numerically superior enemy force throughout this period, Lt. Col. Lucas, forsaking his own safety, performed numerous acts of extraordinary valor in directing the defense of the allied position. On 1 occasion, he flew in a helicopter at treetop level above an entrenched enemy directing the fire of 1 of his companies for over 3 hours. Even though his helicopter was heavily damaged by enemy fire, he remained in an exposed position until the company expended its supply of grenades. He then transferred to another helicopter, dropped critically needed grenades to the troops, and resumed his perilous mission of directing fire on the enemy. These courageous actions by Lt. Col. Lucas prevented the company from being encircled and destroyed by a larger enemy force. On another occasion, Lt. col. Lucas attempted to rescue a crewman trapped in a burning helicopter. As the flames in the aircraft spread, and enemy

fire became intense, Lt. Col. Lucas ordered all members of the rescue party to safety. Then, at great personal risk, he continued the rescue effort amid concentrated enemy mortar fire, intense heat, and exploding ammunition until the aircraft was completely engulfed in flames. Lt. col. Lucas was mortally wounded while directing the successful withdrawal of his battalion from the fire base. His actions

throughout this extended period inspired his men to heroic efforts, and were instrumental in saving the lives of many of his fellow soldiers while inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy. Lt. Col. Lucas' conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action, at the cost of his own life, were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit on him, his unit and the U.S. Army.



ANDRE CAVARO LUCAS

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SAN DIEGO, CALIF. *Presidential*

Luke, hailing from Brittany in France, with the knowledge and travel experience of a true journeyman, finally settled down here at West Point. He has been an advisor to all who wish to travel. Luke still keeps his French background; every Saturday, he gets the spirit with quick French marching music.

Sailing Club 3-2-1-, Treasurer 1; French Club 3-2, Secretary 3, President 2; Corporal 2; Sergeant 1.

A Shau have become a part of division legend to live on alongside the great campaigns of World War II and the exploits of the 1st Brigade in Vietnam between 1965 and 1967.

But of greatest importance is the effect this struggle has had on Thua Thien Province. With communists no longer able to use the A Shau as a highway for infiltration and a launching point for attacks on the lowlands, the people of Thua Thien have been able to advance along the road toward rebuilding their shattered land.

On September 24 the 3rd Brigade command post at Fire Base Rendezvous closed and was returned to Camp Evans. Three days later men of the 3rd Brigade's 3/187th were airlifted back to Evans, completing the withdrawal of division troops from the valley.

Infantry and artillery raids into the valley would continue, blocking any communist attempts to reassert their control of the strange and beautiful landscape that Screaming Eagles had subdued. An airstrip, road, hundreds of landing zones and closed fire bases remained, ready should men of the 101st ever need to return.

MAI LOC

On September 30, 1969 two battalions of the 3rd Brigade were called upon to deploy to Quang Tri Province to assist in the redeployment of the 3rd Marine Div. Mai Loc, a lonely village, became the forward command post for the 1st and 2nd Bns. (Ambl.), 506th Inf. Here, on an old Marine airstrip, C-123s landed and unloaded the 1st, and then the next day, 2nd Currahee battalions.

In an eight company combat assault the following day, Currahees jumped into two landing zones just south of the DMZ. Their aim was the prevention of NVA movement for North Vietnam or Laos which might interfere with the Marine redeployment. Two fire bases were established, Scotch and Schrapnel, and immediately defenses were set up. Cobras of Alfa Trp., 2nd Sqdrn. (Amble.), 17th Cav. suppressed enemy fire against incoming helicopters.

On October 5 elements of the 1st of the 506th assaulted into an area slightly north of Schrapnel and swept to the base of a rock cliff honeycombed with caves. Here they captured a lone NVA and then discovered a cache containing two individual weapons, twenty-two 122 mm rockets, more than 100 mortar rounds, 20 Chi-Com

grenades, 17 mines, 36 rucksacks, 2,750 pounds of fish, 3,850 pounds of rice and 405 cans of meat.

By October 31 the Marines had completed their redeployment and the Currahees began their own phase-out as the 1st ARVN Div. prepared to take over operations in the area.

For the Currahees the 38-day operation had been extremely successful. The Marine deployment had been completed, a large cache had been discovered and 59 enemy had been destroyed.

2nd BRIGADE AT THE DMZ

On November 13, 1969 Geronimos of the 2nd Bn. (Ambl.), 501st Inf. boarded 15 Chinook helicopters and began a journey to the blasted wastelands just south of the DMZ. Here elements of the 1st Bde., 5th Inf. Div. (Mech.) had been engaged in heavy fighting against the 27th NVA Regt.

The journey first took the Geronimos to Quang Tri, the jumping off point for a battalion air assault to the DMZ by UH-1H slicks. As wave after wave of helicopters dropped the Screaming Eagles on the barren landscape, men already on the ground set up a defensive perimeter.

For the next five days the troops uncovered NVA base camps, a small cache and finally, found and engaged the enemy in an all-night battle. In two days of action, 29 NVA were killed.

On November 18 the Geronimos again boarded Chinooks, this time for the trip home. The six days south of the DMZ had been days of rough fighting and persistent effort. And few Geronimos would ever forget the barren and twisted landscape where they had met and overcome the enemy.

RANDOLPH GLEN

In December 1969, as the year drew to a close, Screaming Eagles began Operation Randolph Glen. More than any other operation to date, Randolph Glen was designed to place the resources of the 101st in men, material, technical skills and organizational experience at the disposal of the Vietnamese people.

Part of Randolph Glen was an increased effort to upgrade local force groups and thus help achieve better local force groups and thus help achieve better local security. Mobile Training Teams (MTT) of the 101st were organized to help train Regional Force,

On May 10, 1969 Operation Apache Snow began with one of the largest airmobile assaults of the Vietnam conflict to date. In this XXIV Corps operation, seven battalions of the 101st Abn. Div. (Ambl.), 1st ARVN Div. and 9th Marine Regt., 3rd Marine Div. were inserted into landing zones along the Laotian border. Ten artillery batteries were placed at Fire Bases Bradley, Airborne, Currahee, Berchtesgaden and Cannon only 16 hours before the invasion.

By assaulting west of the A Shau Valley, the allies caught the communists by surprise, cutting them off from their escape routes into Laos. Sweeping eastward toward an area in the northern A Shau known to be a rich communist warehouse area, the allies presented the enemy with a challenge. He must either surrender his caches and attempt to flee or stand and fight.

The enemy's decision set the stage for one of the most difficult battles in division history: the struggle for Dong Ap Bia and Hill 937 (HAMBURGER HILL).

DONG AP BIA

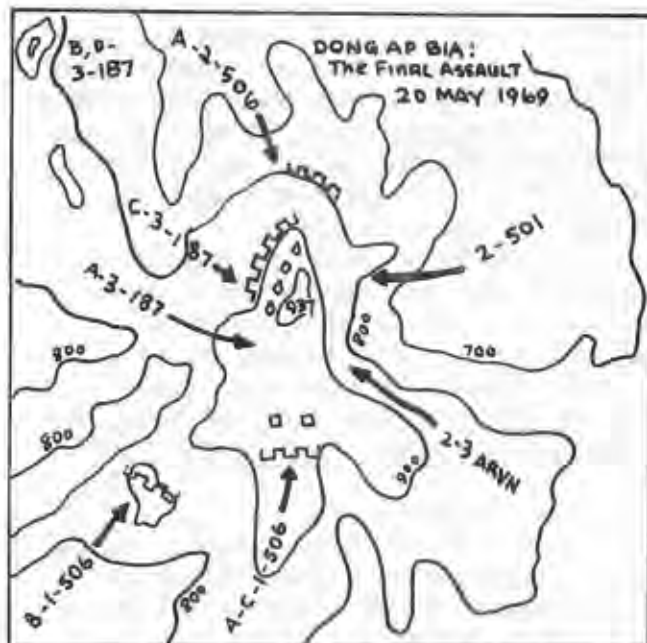
To the men of the 3rd Bn. (Ambl.), 187th Inf. who swept toward Dong Ap Bia, Hill 937, from the west, it was "just another hill". The two miles between the Laotian border and the hill had been filled with rugged jungle but little resistance from the enemy. But as the Rakkasans approached the hillmass, sniper fire began and became more intense as the battalion progressed. Soon concentrated automatic weapons fire crashed out of the jungled slopes and a full scale engagement began. Although the Rakkasans did not know it at the time, they had stumbled upon the heavily fortified, strategic base camp of the 29th NVA Regt. buried in the depths of Dong Ap Bia.

Air strikes and artillery were called in on the mountain. The next morning Lt. Col. Weldon Honeycutt, Columbus, Ga., commander of the 3rd of the 187th, maneuvered his companies along the finger-like ridges leading to the summit. Assaulting through initially dense jungle, the Rakkasans approached an area blasted clear of vegetation by the air strikes and artillery. Here they were pinned down by intense enemy fire. Two squads of Bravo Co. managed to fight their way to within 25 meters of the top but were

back when a sudden rain storm turned the slope into an impossible mudslide. The battalion withdrew.

More air strikes and artillery were called in on the enemy bunker positions as the Rakkasans attempted to maneuver to better positions the following day. This assault faltered after a 45 minute fire fight. The 1st Bn. (Ambl.), 506th Inf., meanwhile, was attempting to reinforce the Rakkasan unit but Screaming Eagles faced determined enemy resistance as they pushed through the dense forest that separated the Currahee unit from Dong Ap Bia. Finally, on May 18, three Currahee companies approached the southern base of the hill and elements of the 2nd Bn. (Ambl.), 506th Inf. and 2 - 3 ARVN prepared to reinforce.

Late in the morning of May 20, four battalions executed a co-ordinated assault on Dong Ap Bia. Rakkasans with Alpha Co., 2nd of the 506th assaulted from the north, the 1st of the 506th from the south and southwest, the ARVN troops from the southeast and Geronimos of the 2nd Bn. (Ambl.), 501st Inf. from the northeast.



Under this intense pressure NVA resistance crumbled and the allied forces swept over the crest. The ten days of bitter fighting resulted in the virtual destruction of the 29th NVA Regt. More than 1,000 tons of bombs and 16,000 rounds of artillery smashed into Dong Ap Bia, destroying hundreds of bunkers and other

FILMS

'Hamburger Hill': Coming To Grips With Vietnam War



Washington
It's been a long time coming, but Hollywood — and perhaps America as well — is finally coming to grips with the Vietnam War. At first, to what should be (but probably is not) their eternal shame, there were the anti-American screeds such as the so-called documentary, *Hearts and Minds*.

So slanted that it would have Nazi film propagandists Leni Riefenstahl blush, Hanoi not surprisingly sent a congratulatory telegram when it was awarded an Oscar by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. The wild applause that erupted when that telegram was read aloud no doubt reflected that no one in the audience that night had a son or daughter serving in Vietnam, or even knew anyone who had a son or daughter serving there.

And neither did those filmmakers who followed. In *Officers and Gentlemen*, the novelist Evelyn Waugh noted that the term "Big Picture" to describe war "had come into vogue at the time when all the painters in the world had finally abandoned lucidity." As if to prove him right the next generation of Vietnam War films after *Hearts and Minds* were "Big Picture" extravaganzas worthy of Dali or De Kooning. Although their allegories were highly praised by the artistic crowd, to combat veterans of the war they were merely silly. For those who had "seen the elephant" first hand, there was nothing at all lucid about the portrayal of war as Russian roulette in *The Deer Hunter* or as the descent into Conradian madness in *Apocalypse Now*.

It took a Vietnam combat infantry veteran, Oliver Stone, to finally begin to break through to reality. *Platoon* is a powerful movie, but it is also schizophrenic. Stone, evidently wanting to remain true to his battlefield comrades in arms as well as to his friends in the anti-war movement, put in something for everyone. As a result, while it is a vast improvement over all that had gone before, *Platoon* doesn't ring completely true.

Now comes a Vietnam War movie worthy of the name. Written and produced by Jim Carabatos, also a combat veteran of the



ED FRESKA, Los Angeles Times Syndicate

“ It comes as close as a movie can get to showing the realities of infantry combat. These gory combat action sequences are a reminder that at the fighting level the Vietnam War was as intense as any war in which our country has been engaged. The 101st Airborne Division, for example, which actually fought the battle of Hamburger Hill, suffered some 20,000 soldiers killed and wounded in Vietnam, more than twice as many as the 9,328 casualties it suffered in its parachute assault into Normandy, its defense of Bastogne and all its other battles of World War II.

loyalty to his fellow squad members, and his professional pride as a medic, "Doc" is the reluctant linch pin that holds the squad together.

And then there are the particularly chilling combat scenes. Unlike the *Rambo* movies, *Hamburger Hill* is no glorification of war. It comes as close as a movie can get to showing the realities of infantry combat. These gory combat action sequences are a reminder that at the fighting level the Vietnam War was as intense as any war in which our country has been engaged. The 101st Airborne Division, for example, which actually fought the battle of Hamburger Hill, suffered some 20,000 soldiers killed and wounded in Vietnam, more than twice as many as the 9,328 casualties it suffered in its parachute assault into Normandy, its defense of Bastogne and all its other battles of World War II.

For all its fine qualities, there will be those who reject *Hamburger Hill* out of hand. They will reject it as they rejected *Hanoi Hilton*, because it recalls shameful events they would rather not remember. In *Hamburger Hill* the riflemen on the front lines remind each other that there were those among their fellow citizens who went beyond the pale of legitimate dissent and deliberately aided and abetted the enemy war effort. They remind each other that if they are killed in action some college coeds would think it cute to call up and tell their parents that their son got what he deserved. They remind each other that if they are wounded in action and sent home there are those draft dodgers who would think it macho to insult and harass them at every opportunity.

These too were the sad truths of the Vietnam War. And after almost 20 years, they're finally being told.

war, *Hamburger Hill* is based on an actual event — the battle of Ap Bia Mountain (Hill 937) in May 1969, the last major ground combat action by U.S. troops in Vietnam. Entrenched on Hill 937 was the North Vietnamese army's 29th infantry regiment, and the movie centers on the efforts of a 14-man rifle squad from the Third Battalion, 187 Infantry, 101st Airborne Division to drive them off the hill.

While the base camp scenes are somewhat contrived, as a whole *Hamburger Hill* has the ring of

truth. For one thing, unlike in *Platoon*, the platoon leader, platoon sergeant and squad leader are competent professionals, reflecting the reality that incompetent leaders seldom long survive on the battle field. For another thing, the human interactions seem right. Infantrymen have few heroes, but combat medics hold a special place in their esteem. In the role of "Doc," the black squad medic, Courtney B. Vance gives a magnificent performance. Driven by the Black Power passions of the day, his

leading out of the valley toward Hue. The Brigade, with the 3rd ARVN Airborne Task Force, was to operate in the Rao Nho and Rao Nai Valleys to establish Firebase Veghel.

On April 23, the 1st Bn., 327th Abn. Inf. continued their clearing operations at Veghel, six miles east of the A Shau Valley. Scattered resistance was met as the paratroopers prepared the LZ for insertion of heavy engineer equipment and artillery pieces.

Company C, 2nd Bn., 327th Abn. Inf. engaged two NVA companies along route 547, 15 miles southwest of Hue on April 25. The battalion's Co. A moved to assist while Co. C maintained contact. The surprised NVA left their positions under a deadly hail of fire as the paratroopers flanked the fortifications. Thirty-two Communists were killed and seven weapons captured when the battle subsided.

Operation Delaware concluded on May 17. The 1st Brigade's units had killed 318 NVA and captured three prisoners and 121 weapons during the 28 day operation. The Brigade also succeeded in interdicting route 547, completely cutting off its use as a resupply route by enemy forces.

BATTLE OF PHUOC YEN

Screaming Eagles terminated Operation Carentan II on May 17, 1968. The paratrooper forces killed 2,100 NVA, captured 157 prisoners and 581 enemy weapons during the 47 day operation around Hue. "Relieve the pressure from the area around Hue," was their standing order and the airborne infantrymen did just that as their highly mobile fighting units continually maintained pressure on the enemy and discouraged any future attack of the old Imperial City.

As a prelude to Phuoc Yen, the classic cordon operation of the Vietnam war, paratroopers from the 2nd Bn., 501st Abn. Inf. followed two Viet Cong into the village of Thon Kim Doi. A NVA company was waiting for the onrushing Screaming Eagles.

Immediately the village was sealed off allowing artillery and air strikes to pound the enemy force. The first day yielded 21 enemy bodies. Illumination continued through the night as the trapped enemy unit tried to exfiltrate the village. The following day found airborne riflemen

firing into the village while air strikes and artillery continued to batter the remaining NVA. The day's results were 47 NVA killed. The final day saw the 2nd Brigade troopers sweeping the village and raising the total body count to 95.

The Phuoc Yen battle began April 28, with the units from the 2nd Brigade trapping the 8th Bn., 90th NVA Reg. in the stocking area of the Song Bo River, two miles northwest of Hue. For four days, companies from three 2nd Brigade battalions, plus local Popular Forces and the "Black Panther" Company of the 1st ARVN Division, lay siege to the stocking shaped village complex that intelligence sources said was harbouring a NVA battalion.

The paratroopers were joined by the batteries of the 21st Artillery, helicopter gunships, and Air Force fighter-bombers. By morning of the fifth day, the NVA body count reached 419, and another 107 became the largest NVA force to surrender en masse to an American unit in the history of the war.

OPERATION NEVADA EAGLE

With the beginning of the Operation Nevada Eagle on May 17, the Screaming Eagles of the 1st and 2nd Brigades had a new mission. The VC and NVA in the area badly needed the rice from the upcoming harvest. Working in coordination with the district chiefs, the brigades protected the villages as they harvested their spring rice.

The first significant combat action of Nevada Eagle occurred on May 21 when the 2/327th repulsed a probe of their night defensive perimeter with artillery and small arms. Thirty-one enemy dead and 12 weapons littered the perimeter the next morning.

Late in May the first of a series of huge weapons and equipment caches was unearthed deep in the triple canopy jungles west of Hue. The 1/327th uncovered three light artillery pieces, two anti-aircraft guns and one truck near FB Veghel. Three days later, the largest cache of Nevada Eagle was discovered 12 miles southwest of Hue by the 2/327th. More than 230 individual and crew-served weapons were pulled from well-prepared storage bunkers dug into the jungle floor camouflaged with several feet of thick, overgrown brush.

During the same period the 1/327th

PART ONE

OPERATION EAGLE THRUST

On December 13, 1967, the 101st Airborne Division deployed 10,356 men more than 10,000 miles from Ft. Campbell to Bien Hoa Air Base in Vietnam. The Screaming Eagles had a "Rendezvous With Destiny" in Southeast Asia. Uniting with the 1st Brigade, in Vietnam since disembarking at Cam Ranh Bay on July 29, 1965, the Division once again became a balanced fighting force. Under the command of Maj. Gen. O. M. Barsanti, this marked the first time a force of more than 10,000 troops, with a majority of their combat equipment, had been flown directly into the Vietnam combat zone.

The secrecy that cloaked Operation Eagle Thrust could not cover up the excitement and enthusiasm of the big move. After reviewing the pre-deployment status of the 101st, Army Chief of Staff General Harold K. Johnson said, "I can only say that I am even more impressed than ever with the undeniable dedication of the Screaming Eagles. I have always been proud of our soldiers in Vietnam, but the fact that approximately 1,000 members of the 101st who have already served in Vietnam -- from battalion commanders to E-2's -- have volunteered to return to that country with the Division, has intensified my pride and esteem."

THE DIVISION ARRIVED JUST IN TIME FOR TET 1968.

Rumors filled the air days before the annual TET cease fire, that there was a planned enemy offensive. Every Screaming Eagle went on alert, anticipating such a move. At 3 a.m. on January 31, 1968, the attack began. Rockets and mortars poured into the Bien Hoa Army and Air Force complex, allowing the enemy maneuver elements to move within striking distance of the base areas.

At 5 a.m. the enemy force launched their ground attack. At the same time there was an attack on the U.S. Embassy in Saigon. A platoon of paratroopers from the 2nd Brigade made a rooftop assault and secured the embassy, floor by floor. The attack on Bien Hoa was driven off by gunships and organic weapons fire by 10:00 that morning. The same day, the 2nd Bn.,

506th Abn. Inf. was airlifted from Phuoc Vinh to sweep the immediate area surrounding the Eagle basecamp. During the fighting and a succeeding follow-up operation named Uniontown, the Division amassed a total of 851 enemy killed.

OPERATION JEB STUART

Just prior to the TET Offensive, the units of the 2nd Brigade deployed north to I Corps to join the 1st Air Cavalry Division in Operation Jeb Stuart. Initially landing and setting up at the Phu Bai airfield, the 2nd Brigade troopers started search operations immediately and soon moved north to LZ Sally. At the outbreak of the TET Offensive, 2nd Brigade troopers under the operational control of the 1st Cav, shared the fighting in the battle of Quang Tri and Hue, killing 94 enemy who had tried to penetrate Screaming Eagle defenses.

During the following weeks the score of enemy killed and captured mounted as 2nd Brigade troopers cleaned out resistance in numerous villages between Hue and Quang Tri. The 1st Bn., 502nd Abn. Inf. launched a road clearing operation along Highway 1 south of Quang Tri. Villagers pinpointed a NVA battalion in an ambush site for the troopers.

Calling in artillery and gunships, the "First Strike" paratroopers blocked escape routes. As the NVA fled the bombardment, the infantrymen ripped into the enemy with withering fire. When the battle ended, 72 enemy bodies lay in front of the paratroopers' positions.

With the offensive blunted near Saigon, the 1st Brigade was airlifted to I Corps. In two weeks, the troopers had cleared the route following Highway 547 to the A Shau Valley. A firebase, Birmingham, was established 16 km from the NVA stronghold, to support the driving paratroopers, who continued to push westward through the mountains. Enemy supply routes were cut, troop movements were interrupted, and arms caches were uncovered by the onrushing troopers.

Operation Jeb Stuart ended with the TET lunar offensive nullified. In 40 days of bitter fighting, over 1,000 of the infiltrating NVA and VC were killed. Battles along Highway 1 and the "Street without Joy" became mourning grounds for the 812th NVA Regiment and the 324th NVA Division.