

7 - RACQUEL WELCH MISSION

More Fun in the Central Highlands

On April 22, 1970, B Company of the 1/22nd captured an enemy soldier. Information from the CIA (captured in action) detainee suggested that the 93rd NVA Battalion along with a mortar company would attack a firebase in the near future. As a result of possible enemy activity, all companies were to move in such a manner so that the platoons could reinforce each other in minimum time in the event of an attack. At night artillery would be employed to register Delta Tangos (determined targets) around each night lager. In essence, artillery rounds would be targeted around each encampment so that they could be brought in much quicker in the event of an attack.

April 23, 1970

We left with our company which included three platoons numbering about 60 men plus the CP which consisted of 8 men. Our platoon walked point for the company, with our squad leading the way. We had a four-legged addition to our squad. He was a K-9 German Shepherd and had a human handler. I think the K-9 was smarter. Neither one of the two was too keen on walking point. I don't believe our point man trusted either one.



We picked up the trail from the previous day's SRP and carefully followed it. The trail eventually crossed the same stream we bathed in a couple of days before. I couldn't believe how great it felt to be in the boonies again. During our trek various sweeps were sent out for scouting purposes. Just after lunch, we ran into a 10'x 10' hooch that was about 8 months old and contained 5-6 water gourds. Nearby was a 3-foot-deep spider hole.

After destroying the hooch and sweeping the area we headed north again and found a 6-month-old spear trap. A spear trap was a spear mounted on a small tree that was bent backward and held in position with a trip wire trigger. Once a

GI tripped the wire, the spear would swing out and impale the individual about chest high.



After a day of humping, the company formed a night laager. Our platoon went on ambush a short distance away. We split up into two squads with each located on the opposite sides of the trail now referred to as Route 101. Each squad climbed a hill on either side of the trail and set up a night laager and ambush. The squads were facing each other on opposite hills, overlooking the trail about one hundred feet below. Claymores were set up along the trail and everybody was online with every weapon ready to fire. God forbid any NVA coming down the trail unless they were a substantially larger force than our own! No traffic came down the trail the rest of the day or during the night.

A Company found three hastily buried bodies 50 meters from an artillery crater and not far from an old GI night laager. The two-week-old bodies were wearing blood-soaked olive drab (OD) clothing and it was thought the artillery barrage from the Recon firefight killed them. Also found with

the bodies were six pieces of handwritten paper, a Chicom grenade, and an AK-47.

On this day Nixon bans occupational draft deferments and deferments for fathers.

April 24, 1970

Our platoon along with the 2nd Platoon headed in an NW direction.

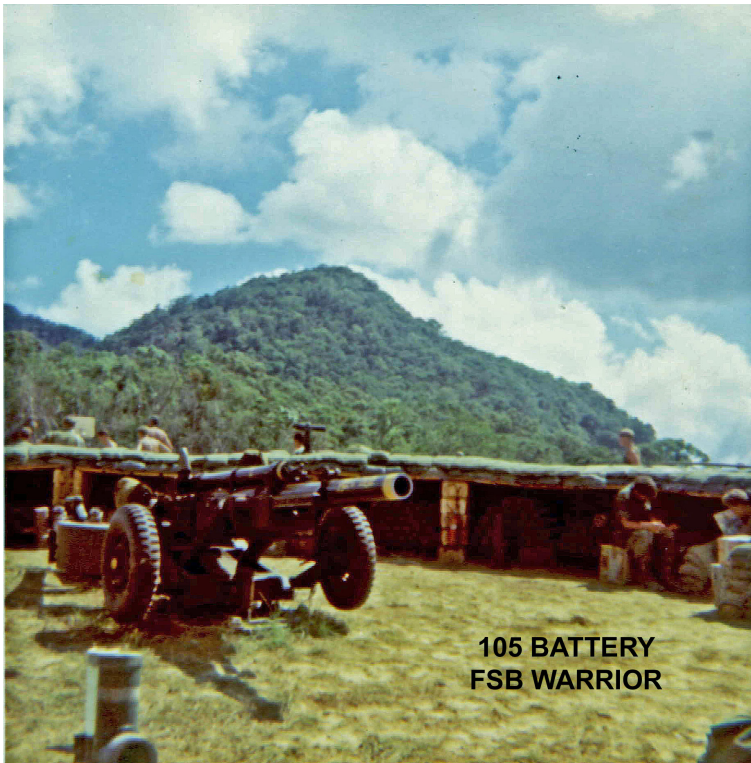
Within an hour 3rd Platoon made contact with two enemies walking down the trail in a southerly direction. They were wearing khaki uniforms and carrying rucksacks. The point man looked elderly and was not carrying a rifle. Upon engaging the enemy with small arms fire, the NVA fled to the north dropping their rucksacks. During the course of employing artillery one of the members of the 3rd platoon was wounded in the arm by shrapnel from a round that landed 50 meters away. Inside the abandoned rucksacks were four NVA maps, 40 pounds of rice, 20 pounds of tobacco, one U.S. canteen, three sets of clothes, two writing tablets, and two metal spoons.

In continuing on their patrol, the 2nd platoon found two rucksacks, a cup, a spoon, old green fatigues, and 12 pounds of rice. No other signs of enemy were found.

Later in the day, as we confidently continued up the wide trail called highway 101 we came upon a fork in the trail both leading uphill. The trail was used within the last 10 days and seemed to carry a lot of traffic. The left-hand fork had an arrow alongside it pointing in a southerly direction. The tracks on the trail and the strong smell of charcoal indicated an enemy presence up the hill. After making a radio call to the powers in charge, the decision was made to bombard the summit of the hill with artillery and then sweep the hill with our platoon.

Our LT called a fire mission from a nearby firebase. The fire mission was to be performed by a 105mm group. The LT gave our position and requested a marker round be fired for location. A marker round was a dud with a whistle to allow the round to be located when it landed. Even though it was a dud round, it could kill you if it landed in your lap. The first round landed to our right about 200 meters away. The LT requested the gun to be adjusted 200 meters to the left and 200 meters forward of our position. The next round landed dead behind us about 100 meters away. The round was too close for comfort; the LT was irritated with the battery's performance and made it clear. He asked for the same line of fire but for the next round to land 200 meters in front of us. The next round landed in the same spot as the first round! The LT wasn't happy and canceled the fire mission.

He then called the powers to be and told them that we could not advance on the hill without accurate artillery support. He requested additional troop support to back our advance up the



hill and was told no other units were immediately available. Without sufficient artillery or troop support, the LT chose to set up an ambush at the base of the hill and sent out a small Recon squad up the hill. They returned after hearing many voices coming from the top of the hill. We withdrew a safe distance from the base of the hill and reported to the powers to be that we had found an empty bunker complex that was active. He recommended that the hill be targeted for an Arc Lamp (B-52 Bomber Attack) mission. The powers to be did not agree and as far as I know, the NVA lived happily ever after.

At the end of the day, D Company made a night laager together, with the exception of the 2nd Platoon. The 2nd platoon set up an ambush a short distance away.

On this day China launches its first space satellite.

April 25th

Our platoon headed west with the rest of the company following. Around noon we found a bunker. A four-man sweep was sent around the bunker to search the area for other signs of the enemy. The sweep ran into movement and opened fire. The movement turned out to be the 2nd Platoon, which had stopped near the bunker. A man from the 2nd Platoon was wounded in the mouth and shoulder. The wounds were serious, but not fatal.

Since there was no place for a chopper to land, he was evacuated using a jungle penetrator. A jungle penetrator was a torpedo-shaped device about three feet long and hung from a cable hoist on the chopper. The pointed end was able to penetrate the heavy foliage when lowered from a hovering chopper. Once the penetrator reached ground level, three paddle-shaped seats could be folded down. The unit could lift out up to three wounded men. Once seated the man or men would be strapped to the torpedo with a waist seat belt. The evacuation could be very dangerous in many ways. The man would be an easy target for a sniper or there was a possibility that the man and the penetrator could get entangled in a tree on the way up.

[See Dustoff 89er](#) and see a similar rescue.

This incident was known as being wounded by “friendly fire”. It was not an uncommon situation. In our case, we were not informed of the close proximity of the 2nd Platoon and had to assume that any movement was unfriendly elements. Under those conditions, you shoot first and ask questions later. Your life depends on making microsecond decisions. You are responsible for knowing where the members of your platoon are located; everybody outside that proximity is considered an enemy.

After the 2nd Platoon man was evacuated we found, in addition to the bunker, a couple of hooches. In and around the hooches were three bamboo fish traps (2 feet in diameter x 5 feet long), an NVA helmet, and one pair of black pajama bottoms. Across from and facing the hooch was another bunker. Also in the area were three trails, one running along a blue line (stream) and two others running up and over a nearby ridge. Another small hooch made of vines was found that contained scraps of paper, one package of morphine, and an empty plastic case.

That night our platoon was assigned to deploy an ambush not far from the main body of our Company. The ambush resulted in no enemy contact. During that same day, all the other units had a quiet day. There was no enemy contact or any other discoveries worth noting.

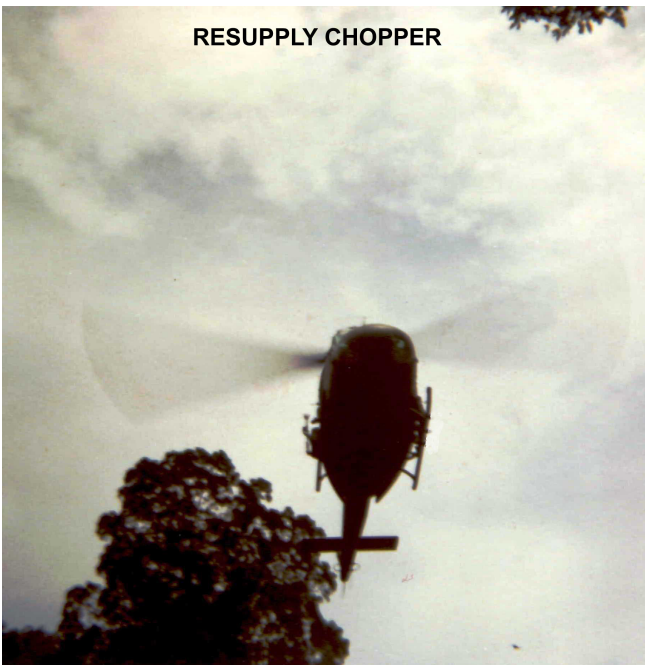
During a typical mission, you never removed your uniform, even while sleeping. Every morning I would usually take off my boots and switch socks from one foot to the other to prevent blisters. After a couple of days in the field, we really began to smell. Wearing underwear was not advisable since it promoted the growth of fungus (skin disease) in a very delicate area. There was only one mushroom I wanted in my pants. The only time we came

close to washing was when crossing a river. During the dry season, water was usually in short supply, so brushing one's teeth did not happen in the field.



We used our toothbrushes to keep our weapons clean. Official army rifle cleaning kits were scarce so we had to depend on innovative cleaning devices. The only thing in abundance was army rifle lubricant, which left a carbon residue after firing, I was told, and caused the M-16 to jam. We used WD-40, which we had our parents ship over from the states. One church group would also send us Care packages with WD-40 as well as other goodies. The only organization that did not recognize the need for a good lubricant was the army! I'm sure they'll get it right for the next war.

April 26, 1970



Our platoon patrolled to the south while the 2nd Platoon moved to the west. While we patrolled the 3rd Platoon secured an LZ for resupply for the company. A resupply consisted of getting enough food for four days which was in the form of C-Rations and sometimes LRPs. The C-Rations were canned goods, while the LRP was a freeze-dried packet. The LRP was tastier but required the addition of water, which during the dry season could be scarce. We usually also received our mail and an SP Pack. An SP Pack was a large sealed cardboard carton that contained cigarettes, soap, toothpaste, toothbrushes, and other miscellaneous goods. If we were really lucky the mail would include packages of goodies from home. Sometimes cases of soda would

be included in the resupply that would be divided equally among the troops. About every two weeks, we would also receive clean clothes. Resupply was like Christmas every four days, especially if there was mail from home. On this day the resupply was the only thing of note that happened. No sign of the enemy.

During that same day, the following happened:

A Company 3rd Platoon found a lot of signs of the enemy including numerous spear traps and 17 large (10x15) hooches with bunkers located underneath each hooch and a nearby small temple hut, a training area, an aid station, three cooking huts, and a mess hall. The complex was brand new, no older than six months old with more hooches under construction. The complex straddled a stream. The training area consisted of 6 rows of benches thirteen feet long with four desks in each row of benches. There was a podium located at the head of the training area. The interior of each cooking hut was very clean and consisted of a fireplace at one end that had four 18-inch stakes forming a crude stove.

Nearby, A Company 1st Platoon found a fresh trail with a 5x4x3 automatic weapon pit and five spider holes. The pit had not been used in the last six months.

Today Master and Johnson published "Human Sexual Inadequacy". Yeah, tell me about it.

April 27, 1970

Our platoon patrolled to the north while the 3rd Platoon patrolled to the west and the 2nd Platoon was left at the resupply LZ in ambush waiting for a chopper to pick up two individuals with multiple bee stings.

Around noontime we found five bicycles and assorted gear that included three hand air pumps, one can of axle grease, one survival knife, a pair of pliers, one screwdriver, one hammer, one hacksaw, one 12-inch crescent wrench, one open-end wrench, two bicycle horns, one wedge, one 1 inch by eight-foot long rubber strap, twenty iron bars used for bicycle carrying racks, and other miscellaneous items. Everything found was in good shape. Later in the day, we ran into a message carved on a tree alongside the main trail we were following. Our Kit Carson scout translated it to mean a warning about punji sticks and spear traps in the area. The message was about one week old.

That night all elements in our company made separate night laagers. The mission was proving to be relatively easy. We spent most of the time on trails that made the going easy and had no contact with the enemy.

During that same day, the following happened:

A Company 3rd Platoon spotted one enemy heading south along the trail. When he was within 15 meters they opened fire and killed him. He was wearing green pants, a gray shirt, and Ho Chi Minh sandals, and carrying an NVA-style rucksack. One GI was evacuated with a punji stick wound and an infected lymph gland. At about the same time, the 2nd Platoon entered the village that the 3rd Platoon had found on the previous day and found some documents indicating that the complex was a medical training center. Later in the afternoon

1st Platoon found four large hooches with one having a bunker under it. Nearby, six rucksacks were found abandoned. The area was recently used.

All elements of B Company were following different trails. Around noon the dog in the 3rd Platoon alerted the unit to enemy movement. Artillery was employed on the possible enemy position with negative results. Numerous trails were found leading to the valley. Later in the afternoon 2nd Platoon began receiving small arms fire from what sounded like an M-16. One individual was sighted 20 meters away fleeing to the NW. The platoon responded with negative results. A sweep of the area found tracks made on a trail by 7 to 9 individuals. The tracks were about 48 hours old.

During the night the D Company CP had movement 200 meters to the west of their night laager. It sounded like rattling canteens.

Gypsy Rose Lee, the famous stripper, dies today at the age of 56 from cancer.

April 28, 1970

D Company CP sent out a sweep to investigate the area of the previous night's movement. Nothing was found. Our platoon continued following the large trail called Route 101. Just before noon, we took a break on the trail. Often we would take a quick nap, or eat a snack. The heat and exercise made you often crave sleep.

In this particular instance, the last man in line was not paying attention, and an NVA soldier trotting up the trail, with his head down, almost ran over him! Both soldiers were equally surprised when this happened. The NVA reversed direction and began to make his escape. At the same time, our man fumbled with his M-16 finally getting it off safety, and began spraying the area on full automatic fire. He emptied an entire clip (20 rounds) in the direction of the NVA in about three seconds. The firing startled us all, and we formed a line perpendicular to the trail expecting more NVA. Nothing happened. We received no return fire from the enemy.

We inspected the trail for any signs of blood but found none. It looked like a single NVA had stumbled upon us. He was observed wearing khakis but didn't seem to be carrying a weapon. He may have been a messenger or a supply carrier. Sometimes a single NVA would travel at a slow trot to make time. In the course of traveling long distances, they would keep their head down to either offset the weight of their rucksack or to look for GI trip wires on the trail. Maybe he had no idea that there were GIs in the area and he was in a trance from the physical exertion.

At about the same time as our contact, the 2nd Platoon ran into two enemies and opened fire with negative results. Again, the enemy did not look as though they had weapons or rucksacks. The platoon set up an ambush on a fresh trail nearby with no results. They set up a night laager in the same vicinity and had enemy movement during the night.

We set up a night laager not far away from our contact with the enemy. It was an uneventful night.

During that same day, the following happened:

B Company 1st Platoon found a fresh trail only 1 or 2 days old that had been used by a large group. It was impossible to tell the direction of travel of the group. The 3rd Platoon also found a fresh trail that was used by a large force, but they could not tell the direction of travel either.

That morning C Company inspected the area in which they had enemy movement the night before. They found nothing. During the day the company had to evacuate a man with a high fever.

Recon found a massive bunker complex with 6 hooches. The complex was capable of housing 60 personnel. Before entering the complex, Recon employed artillery on the area. Upon re-entering the complex they found 30 bunkers measuring 3x6x4 feet deep with 2-foot overhangs. The bunkers were between 1 to 2 months old. There were a total of 15 hooches measuring 4x6x4 feet holding three individuals each. The whole area covered a rectangle measuring 100x 200 meters with a 2-foot wide trail leading to it. There were signs of 4 individuals using the trail within the last 48 hours.

April 29, 1970

Our platoon continued moving, independent of the main company, in a northerly direction up Route 101. About mid-morning we came to a well-constructed bridge that was 60 feet long by 5 feet wide crossing a 2-3 foot wide stream that was about six feet deep. The bridge was constructed with 2-3" diameter logs and had four supporting beams measuring 6-8" in diameter. The bridge runs in an NW-SE direction. Across the bridge on the NW side, we found a clearing that had signs of being an enemy night lager. A fish trap was also found in the area. On a nearby tree, an arrow was carved pointing NE. Under the arrow, there was a fish symbol with a series of notches underneath it.

The 2nd Platoon checked enemy movement near their area but found nothing.

Shortly after our bridge discovery, the rest of D Company had three mortar or artillery rounds land 700 meters to their south.

By all standards, our company had a quiet day. We made a night lager not far from the bridge hoping to engage some enemy during the night. The night was uneventful.

During that same day, the following happened:

A Company continued to find enemy signs south of the area where Recon had their firefight earlier in the month. During their patrol, two men were wounded by punji stakes and were evacuated. The 1st Platoon and CP found and destroyed two hooches with surrounding punji stake fields. The 3rd Platoon found six hooches and 30-40 spider holes near an N-S trail that was about three feet wide. The area was used within the last 7-10 days.

B Company had an uneventful day, with the exception of one man cutting his finger badly. He had to be evacuated.

C Company, which was securing FSB RAQUEL, investigated enemy movement to the west of their position with negative results.

Recon found two hooches that measured 6x4x4 and were located four feet above the ground. Inside was 2500 lb. of rice and 50 lb. of corn. 2-3 individuals used the area within the last two weeks. Nearby was an E-W trail that was about one foot wide.

At Ohio State student riots erupt. The National Guard shoots 7 students in quelling the riot.

April 30, 1970

Our platoon started moving due south closing with the rest of D Company. During our march, we ran into nothing to write home about.

Our 3rd Platoon found a basket containing two sandbags. One contained a potato substitute and the other hand tools and a notebook that resembled a diary. The 3rd Platoon also had to have a man airlifted with a high fever. High fevers were a common occurrence among grunts. In most cases, they came quickly and were very high resulting in a mandatory evacuation to a hospital. The fevers usually went as quickly as they came with no medical explanation. Some guys seemed to be more susceptible to them than other guys. I know one guy that was evacuated three times in two months. The doctors didn't know the cause of the fevers.

Our night was uneventful.

During that same day, the following happened:

A Company found a large hooch that was about three months old. During the day one man was wounded by a spear trap in the leg, another had a high fever, another had a cut leg, and two men sustained punji stick wounds. All were evacuated.

B Company was airlifted from their area to a new location. Their airlift took them across the Dak Som and Suoi Kon Valleys to a location 8 km North of the abandoned FSB Challenge. One of the LZs of B Company was the site of old FSB Suzie. The landings were uncontested, also known as a "Cold LZ". The code name for their operation was "Eichelberger Black". After landing one man was evacuated with a punji stick wound. Later that day one of their units reported enemy movement to the west and employed artillery.

C Company continued to secure and upgrade FSBs Raquel and Welch.

Recon was now ordered attached to A Company. They were located 3-4 km to the southwest of A Company.

Unbeknownst to us back in the states, the situation was really heating up. We had no way of knowing what lay in our future. We would be the last to know. The joke was on us.

The riots continued and the Ohio National Guard dispersed students using tear gas and shotguns. A total of 73 students are injured and 100 are arrested.



In a televised speech, Nixon announces that as he speaks several thousand American troops were being sent into Cambodia to attack NVA staging areas, which are highlighted on a map. He assures the American people that the action is "not an invasion of Cambodia" but a necessary extension of the Vietnam War designed to protect the lives of American servicemen and shorten the war.

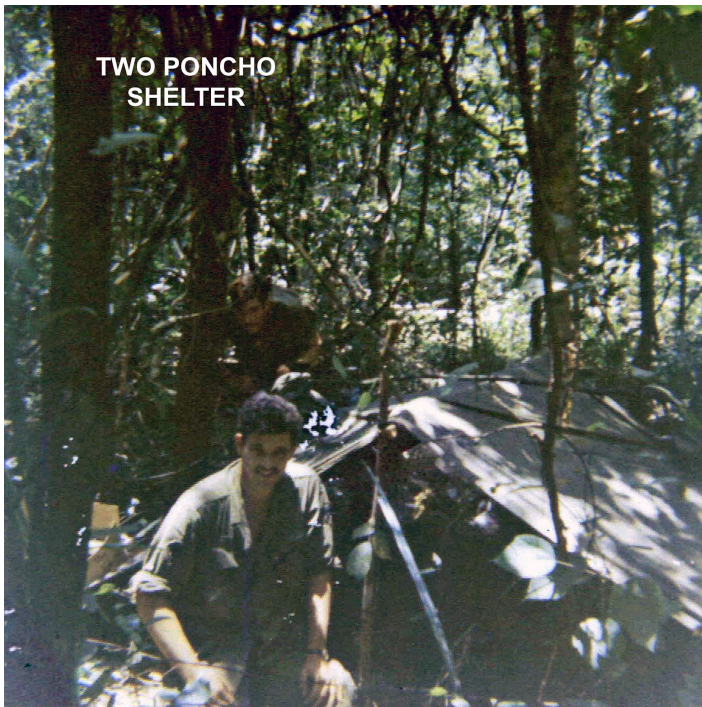
This announcement sparked an outcry of protest from congressional critics of the war. Senators Church and Cooper begin writing an amendment that would bar further funds from being used for military operations in Cambodia.

May 1, 1970

Our Platoon left our night laager and headed in a northwesterly direction traveling along another trail.

The 2nd Platoon found another large hooch with a four feet deep cellar. The hooch was about 3-4 months old.

The 3rd Platoon found a NE-SW trail that was approximately two months old that had been used within the last 4-5 days.



Although there was surrounding action and signs of a lot of enemies, my tour in Vietnam was becoming very boring. At night I had adapted to sleeping in a hammock or on the ground quite nicely. I preferred the hammock to the ground. If you prepared your sleeping area by removing twigs and rocks it could be very comfortable sleeping on the ground.

Depending on the area, we were sometimes allowed to put up a poncho tent. By putting two ponchos together, you could make a shelter that would hold up to 3 guys. Although it was the beginning of monsoon season we saw very little rain, thus making sleeping very dry.

The only thing I couldn't escape at night was the mosquitoes. Any exposed skin was attacked in mass. Using bug repellent was frowned upon because of the telltale odor, which could give away your presence. At night we would cover ourselves with a poncho liner, even though it was hot and humid at night. In spite of the attempt at avoiding bites, it was almost impossible. On a typical morning, you would awake with swollen hands. The only pest that did not bother us was the leaches.

During that same day, the following happened:

Our Battalion was notified by our brigade that there would be a defoliation mission using [Agent Orange](#) to our NE. The planes would be accompanied by gunships. The gunships would notify us before firing.

A Company had two men sustain punji stick wounds. They were evacuated. Later the unit was airlifted to FSB Challenge and replaced by C Company.

B Company found an old hooch that had not been used for a long time. The hooch was about a year old. During the day a man had a high fever and a stiff neck and back. He was evacuated. Another man, near old FSB Suzie, sustained a severe punji stick wound one inch below the knee. The punji stick penetrated 2-1/2" into the leg. The man was also evacuated. During the night laager, bright lights were observed flashing off and on about a km. to their SW. Artillery was employed in that direction.

Before their scheduled airlift, Recon requested a replacement for their dog, Sam. Sam had leaches in his nose that needed medical attention.

Recon was airlifted to a new area about 7 km. to their west. An enemy base camp was suspected to be in this area.

In Connecticut, police used tear gas to disperse a rally of 12,000 Black Panther supporters.

May 2, 1970

We left our night laager and headed NW down the trail with our K-9 named Bart and his handler leading. We were on our way to set up an ambush. As the squad rounded a tight curve, another lone NVA soldier ran into us. The K-9 and his handler almost got run over! Our pointman, just behind the K-9 and his handler, opened fire with his shotgun, but did not hit the NVA. Again, everybody got online perpendicular to the trail. Unfortunately, our K-9 ended up in a punji stick patch and got impaled in the ankle and elbow. Nothing happened and there was no sign of blood from the enemy. The K-9 was not wounded seriously but had to be evacuated because of the danger of infection from the punji stick.

So much for our K-9's keen sense of smell and his ability to detect danger. I think our K-9 Team was new to the bush. I'm sure the smell of the enemy and punji stick odor was everywhere and confused the dog. I believe his handler thought it was a million-dollar wound because they would get out of the field. He was really happy about being extracted and I don't blame him. Anyway, how do you get a dog and his handler evacuated from the jungle? I was about to find out.

[Punji Sticks](#) were slim bamboo sticks with one sharpened end. The sticks were about 3/8" wide, 1/8" thick, and about one foot long. The blunt end was driven into the ground about 4 to 6 inches at a 45-degree angle and aimed toward the trail. Dozens of these sticks were placed in thick vegetation and grass, making them well hidden. To add insult to injury, the punji stick was usually dipped in human feces to promote infection. They were meant to wound a grunt and remove him from the field. Sometimes the stick could not even be removed from the wound because the slivers acted like barbs. The resultant wound had to be treated at a medical facility immediately. The jungle atmosphere was not conducive to the healing process, even for minor cuts and abrasions. Whenever you came under fire, your natural instinct was to dive into the nearest vegetation for cover. In Vietnam, you always had second thoughts about jumping into a bed of punji sticks. It was never a pleasant thought and created additional stress on your natural reaction to hit the dirt. Diving into a punji patch could actually be fatal if you landed just right. I never heard of anybody dying that way, but then again deaths were never reported in detail.

The LT picked an area just off the trail and we began cutting down trees, using our machetes. The trees that were too big to cut were rigged with [C-4 explosives](#) and blown down. Blowing up trees was a dangerous business. Later on, I would hear stories of people being killed while blowing trees, either the blast would get them or a tree would fall on them.

C-4 was a plastic explosive that had the consistency of silly putty and was colored white. It was very stable and it could be dropped and abused, or could be burned like a heat tab. Although it was not approved, we cooked with C-4 frequently. While it was burning you could not stamp out the flame or it would explode, taking your foot with it. If you accidentally got any in your food and ingested it, you would go into convulsions and get violently sick. Everybody

was required to carry at least two two-pound bars of C-4. Each bar was an inch thick, two inches wide; one foot long, and weighed about two pounds.

After about four hours of work, we were able to create a hole in the jungle that was large enough for a Huey to fly in. The surrounding trees were over a hundred and fifty feet tall. The helicopter had to fly in perfectly vertically. It was like trying to fly down a chimney with the tips of the blades hitting the surrounding branches! I was glad I wasn't on that helicopter. A medivac picked up our K-9 and his handler. We never saw them again.

We got back on the trail to find a night laager. Late in the night brigade issued a Warning Order to our battalion to be prepared to airlift back to An Khe on May 3. We were told to report back to the vicinity of the LZ we just created for extraction up the chimney the next morning. Our mission was prematurely terminated with no reason given.

There was speculation about a mission into Cambodia. I was told by one of the short-timers that early in their tour they had worked near the Cambodian border, often crossing over a short distance to surprise the NVA. It was an illegal move but done nonetheless, on occasion. It was odd that crossing the border was considered illegal by our government, while the NVA could have entire base camps and supply highways there. I couldn't get over our leaders allowing NVA safe sanctuaries. I was to learn later that this was only a small part of the insane way that our "leaders" ran the "war". They must have thought a lot about Ho Chi Minh's country. Other than the speculation, the night was uneventful.

During the same day, the 2nd Platoon had enemy movement to their NW. They employed artillery on the enemy with negative results.

In other parts of the 2/35th area, the following was happening:

A Company began the task of closing the firebase.

B Company was scheduled to receive two K-9s at noon. Just before nightfall, their 1st Platoon received small-arms fire from a nearby ridge line that was not effective because of the distance. They recognized three AK-47s firing plus an automatic weapon that they did not recognize. They returned fire and employed artillery. They also swept the immediate area to be on the safe side, in case the enemy was preparing a surprise attack. The sweep found nothing.

C Company was notified that they would be receiving a K-9 dog today. C Company, who had replaced A Company the previous day, found an N-S trail 1-1/2 feet wide that was last used about two weeks ago by a number of individuals. They could not tell how many individuals or their direction of travel. Nearby on two trees, there were some sticks hung as a signal or message. Each tree had one stick hung vertically and the rest were hung horizontally. Their Kit Carson scout interpreted this to send a message to the enemy not to use this trail because there were GIs in the area.

Recon was also notified that they would be receiving a K-9 Team today.

Today a total of 128 U.S. jets carry out a heavy raid on North Vietnam.

May 3, 1970

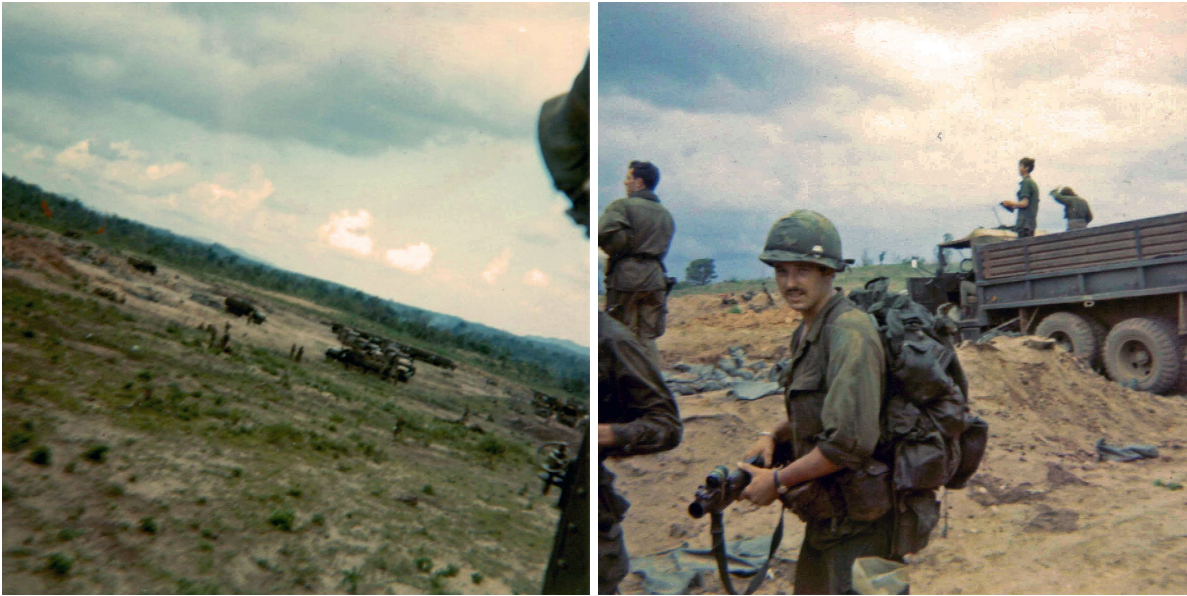
We got an early morning start to the LZ and waited half a day for our extraction. I couldn't wait to fly up the chimney! The ride was as tight and thrilling as I anticipated. I really had a lot of respect for the pilot's ability.



Once out of the chimney I enjoyed the scenery. The colors and terrain of the Central Highlands were beautiful.



We landed at an abandoned firebase called Amelia where a convoy of trucks was waiting to transport us to An Khe (Camp Radcliffe), about two hours away.



Why they didn't fly us directly into An Khe is beyond me. As it turned, out this was one of the army's many ploys for confusing the enemy. Unfortunately, the enemy wasn't as stupid as the army was arrogant!

We had been in the field for about two weeks without a change of clothes. I was now used to being ripe all the time. If my mother could only smell me now.

During the ride into An Khe, another rumor was spreading in the convoy that we were being shipped out of the country. At this time the army was in the process of withdrawing troops from Vietnam and turning the fighting over to the South Vietnamese army. The South Vietnamese army was called ARVN, while the individual soldiers were known as ARVNs. The rumor was too good to be true but I preferred it to the Cambodian rumor.

Why would we invade Cambodia at this point in the war? Weren't we withdrawing from Vietnam? An invasion didn't seem probable, although it would be a real kick in the ass to the NVA. Better late than never?

Upon arriving at Camp Radcliffe, there were no showers or fresh clothes ready for us. We would have to wait until the next day for these luxuries. There were concrete slabs in a field area that were to have cots with tents over them for shelter when we arrived, but the tents and cots had not arrived yet! We could sleep on the slabs if we wanted! I chose to sleep on the soft ground.

There were hot showers across the road, but they were reserved for REMF¹s, and off limits to us under penalty of court-martial! They were afraid we might run them out of hot water!

The LT arranged for C-Rations, warm beer, and a block of ice to be delivered to our area. We rolled the can of beer on the ice to cool it. It only took about a minute to get it ice cold.

¹ Rear Echelon Mother F__kers

Everybody broke into small groups for card games or bull sessions. We hit the sack shortly after dark without having to pull guard duty or details. It was too good to be true!

MISSION OVERVIEW:

My platoon saw very brief action on the mission. During the mission, the 2/35th had an average of three companies in the field at any one given time. This amounted to about 300 grunts on the ground for 10-1/2 days.

Like the previous mission, several enemy contacts were made, and many enemy complexes and trails were discovered. All the complexes and supplies were removed or destroyed. The enemy complexes were capable of housing approximately 440 individuals. Again, due to the dense nature of the vegetation, I assume we only discovered a fraction of the complexes in the area.

During the mission, the 2/35th had nobody killed in action (KIA) and only 1 man wounded in action (WIA). The enemy lost 1 man KIA and unknown WIA if any.

We lost 10 men and 1 dog that were wounded by indirect enemy action; booby traps such as punji sticks. During the same period, accidents and sickness claimed another 13 men that had to be evacuated from the field. The 10-1/2 days of the mission resulted in 24 individuals out of 300 wounded (direct and indirect), or evacuated from combat due to injury or sickness. The mission resulted in more than 1 out of 12 men (9%) being evacuated from the field. The casualty rate caused by the enemy was 10 men out of the 300 man total (3%).