

# SYKES

# REGULARS



## REPORTER



### 1st BATTALION



### 20th INFANTRY

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#### ALPHA COMPANY POLICES UP THE GAZA STRIP

Alpha Co. brought smoke on the enemy in the battalion's TAOR this week by accounting for 39 enemy dead, wounded, captured, or "Chieu Hoied," while operating in the Gaza Strip coastline, two miles east of Duc Ph.

The company has been providing security for the men and equipment of the Americal Division's 39th Engineering Battalion and the 1st Marine Division's 9th Engineering Battalion, who for the past month have been engaged in a massive land clearing operation in the "Strip."

MACV at Mo Duc requested Alpha Co.'s assistance Nov. 10 in extracting a VC troop who desired to Chieu Hoi if the Americans would contact him. He had escaped from his unit after his cohorts learned of his plans to Chieu Hoi. Alpha's 3d Platoon, working with a Vietnamese Recon unit and their MACV advisors, picked up the Hoi Chanh, who led the men to a tunnel, which they blew, resulting in one VC KIA.

They then backtracked and blew four more tunnels with their claymores and got two more VC kills. They went on to capture six VC, wound two, and uncover a Chinese Communist KS assault rifle, a carbine, and eight hand frags. They also successfully extracted the Hoi Chanh's family.

The following day, the company's 1st Platoon moved back into the area with the Hoi Chanh, who pointed out three more hand frags and a tunnel containing medical supplies and three AK-44 single-shot bolt-action weapons.

Alpha's effectiveness was apparently sufficient inducement for three more VC (two guerillas and one main-force VC) to Chieu Hoi the next day, and in a skirmish that followed, the 2d Platoon captured two more VC.

Nov. 13 was the company's most productive day, however. The 3d Platoon, operating with the Vietnamese Recon unit, reacted to intelligence that a 12-man enemy force was located at the southern end of the "Strip" by the mouth of the Song Tra Cau. In the initial engagement, the Vietnamese killed two NVA. Tracks from the 1st Squadron, 1st Cavalry were immediately scrambled and brought the 1st Platoon and an element of the CP into the area. The Vietnamese troops swept south with the 1st Platoon and CP, while the 3d Platoon and tracks estab-

lished themselves as a blocking force by the river.

During the sweep, the Vietnamese registered one NVA KIA and captured two. Then the sweeping force ran into a burst of AK-47 fire from the bush, thick with vines and bamboo. The men maneuvered around the site and blasted it with hand frags and claymores. A check of the bush revealed another NVA KIA with his AK-47. The Vietnamese Recon squad then picked up two more NVA CIA.

In the same area, 1LT Paul E. Ritz (Remsen, Iowa), the company's forward artillery observer, was moving over a bunker when he suddenly confronted two NVA, not more than six feet away. He shot one and then backed off the bunker as the other prepared to throw a ChiCom. Captain Daniel Thomas (Leesville, La.), the company's commanding officer, flanked the NVA with SP/4 Dee Dye (Blue Springs, Mo.). Dye opened up on the enemy, registering the day's fifth NVA KIA. With some well placed fire into the brush by the river, PFC Juan Mercado (Phoenix, Ariz.) dropped another NVA and picked up another AK-47.

During a temporary lull in the contact, the Charlie-Charlie was able to insert the battalion commander into the area. He was moving through the brush with the company CP when CPT Thomas spotted a pair of HO Chi Minh sandals in the thick vines next to the pathway. Thomas warned the CO to move back, and both men slammed their bolts forward. The NVA decided to turn himself in, and the Vietnamese found his AK-47 near him in the brush.

The next day, Alpha's 2d Platoon captured another NVA, who was carrying a ChiCom. Later that night, one of the company's OPs spotted nine enemy near the beach and called in artillery on their position. The following day, the engineers apprehended two more VC.

Nov. 16, the company found five enemy bodies. One had a pistol and was clothed in a green NVA uniform. The other four were VC, believed to have been killed by arty two days previously. The 2d Platoon ended the company's combat activity for the week by registering another NVA KIA.

Without doubt, the "Strike-holders" of Alpha Co. aptly demonstrated a high degree of ability and combat effectiveness this week by their quick and deft thrusts into the enemy's scattered footholds in the Gaza Strip.



# CHARLIE COMPANY

NEW SERGEANT MAJOR FOR 1-20

THE EXCITEMENT OF STANDING ON A MINE

The careers of many of today's professional soldiers go back to the Korean Conflict and perhaps to the post-World War II years of the late 1940s. But the battalion's top Enlisted Man, Command Sergeant Major (CSM) Jeremiah Lewis (Marina, Calif.), can boast of combat experience during the war against the Japanese in the Pacific Theater with the 31st Division. To date, he has more than 26 years with the Army.

He served three tours in Korea, where he was wounded twice, acting as both Platoon Sergeant and Platoon Leader.

He attended the Infantry School at Ft. Benning in 1950 and 1953 and later studied Arabic in Monterrey, Calif., in preparation for an assignment to Saudi Arabia, where he was the mission's Chief Enlisted Advisor. He has served in Europe, and his last assignment was at Ft. Buckner, Okinawa, as Chief Operations NCO.

The Sergeant Major has earned the following decorations during his career: the Silver Star, the Bronze Star for Meritorious Service, the Army Commendation Medal with an Oak Leaf Cluster, the Purple Heart with a cluster, and the Combat Infantryman Badge with a Star. Two of his units, during World War II and in Korea, earned the Presidential Unit Citation.

CSM LEWIS is married and has two children--a girl, almost 15, and a boy, 4½-years-old.

## SYKES' REGULARS GRIND ON

Although Alpha Co. monopolized most of the action this week, the rest of the battalion was busy elsewhere in the TAOR.

Nov. 11, Delta Co.'s 3d Platoon, operating two miles north of Duc Pho, registered a VC/NVA KIA, who was carrying a pistol belt and four hand frags. SP/4 Michael Henderson (Tustin, Calif.) fired on another VC/NVA and saw him fall. The men also picked up two VCS.

Two days later, Bravo Co.'s 3d Platoon uncovered a 500 pound bomb near the Red Ball, four miles north of Duc Pho. Later in the afternoon, Charlie Co.'s 2d Platoon blew a tunnel complex, four miles west of Duc Pho, and extracted 21 civilians from the restricted zone in the area.

The following morning, the Vietnamese civilians with Bravo Co. found a command detonated mine, containing 120 pounds of explosives, four miles northwest of Duc Pho. An hour later, a half-mile east of the highway, Delta's 2d Platoon uncovered a cache containing over five tons of rice. The platoon then discovered two punji pits, just south of the rice cache.

In the final two days of the week, Bravo Co. picked up three VCS and uncovered a 75mm round and two 55-gallon drums of rice. Delta also picked up three more VCS.

One night this week, the nine-man 3d Squad, 3d Platoon, was moving through a ditch enroute to its ambush site, five miles northwest of Duc Pho. The men were probing their way through the darkness, their senses keen and alert for hints of enemy movement, when PFC Don Townsend (Baltimore) noticed more than his footfall on the damp ground--he heard the ominous, rasping squeak of two rusty wires making contact beneath his boot.

"As calmly as I could, I told the people around me to move away. Our Squad Leader, SGT (Wayne) Cook (Knoxville, Tenn.), came back, and I told him I thought I'd stepped on some kind of pressure-release mine. I wanted to jump off the thing, but he wouldn't let me. Then he called the E.O.D. team (Explosive Ordnance Disposal)," explained Townsend. The tension was heightened by the fact that movement had been spotted outside the squad's hasty perimeter.

In a matter of minutes, three ships from the 174th Helicopter Assault Co. were scrambled and in the air. A Shark gunship provided security for the Dolphin flare chopper that illuminated the area and the Huey slick that inserted SSG Robert Claar (Effingham, Ill.) and SP/5 Michael Beers (Nebraska City, Nebr.) to disarm the mine.

"We put a machete between his foot and the wire and filled two shirts with dirt to place on top of the wire to maintain the pressure. Then we grabbed him by the arms and yanked him away," related Beers.

After a short wait on a small hill nearby, the men went back to check out the site. It turned out not to be a mine after all--just a rusty coil of barbed wire.

"I was relieved," said Townsend in an understated comment on the fact that no one had been hurt.

Staff Sergeant Frank Hill (Bayonne, N.J.) is the Sykes' Regulars' NCO of the week for the week of Nov. 12-18. He has been with Charlie Co. for two months now and is the Platoon Sergeant of the 2d Platoon.

SSG Hill holds a B.S. in accounting from St. Peter's College in Jersey City, N.J. and has completed a year at Fordham Law School in New York City. Before entering the Army, he supplemented his studies by working in the New York Stock Exchange on Wall St. During his seven years at the N.Y.S.E., he served in a number of capacities from floor runner to working in the accounting department. He Plans to become affiliated with the Exchange upon completion of his active service.

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TO THE LIMIT OF OUR ABILITY  
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