

It has been over 50 years since these events occurred so they are somewhat fuzzy, but I provided as much detail as I can remember.

2d Mike Strike Force Operations, Plei Trap Valley, April 1969

This was search and destroy operation designed to sweep the valley to locate and clear NVA strongholds, training centers, hospitals, and storage sites.

The maneuver force consisted of the 2d Mobile Strike Force (MSF), commanded by 5th SF Group personnel (a total of 17 of which three were Australian) with support from 2d BDE 4th INF DIV.

Fire support was provided by A battery, 1st battalion 92d FA (-) in direct support, an element from 2dBDE Headquarters, and a fire support liaison team and FO team from 4th Battalion 42d FA that coordinated fires from A 1-92FA (-) and other field artillery batteries and air assets allocated for the operation. The MSF infantry forces involved in the operation were air lifted into their locations from



Figure 1. Poli Kleng airstrip, with LZ BASS on the left and RVN Special Forces Camp (Triangle shape) on the right

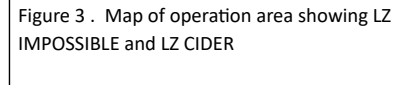
Polei Kleng (LZ Bass) the A/1-92 minus, a 2d Brigade, 4th Infantry Division Headquarters team, 4th Battalion 42d Field Artillery liaison Team, and 5th

Special Forces Headquarters personnel conducted an air movement to landing zone (LZ) Impossible (YA836747) also known as LZ Susan G that is approximately 45 KM southwest of Kontum). (Figure 2) The Mobile Strike Forces were inserted into positions in the Plei Trap Valley. Forces airlifted to LZ Impossible on 16 April 1969 remained there from that date until 27 April 1969 when they were relocated to LZ Marylou and LZ Bass, respectively. LZ IMPOSSIBLE was an awful tactically unsound firebase located on large shoulder on the south side of a mountain called Cu Ki Tem Dar. It was a very vulnerable location as the enemy could easily have attacked from the higher portions of the mountain and we were very fortunately that they did not. This vulnerability can be seen in several of the Figure 1. Some of the key personnel in the operation that I can remember were: MAJ Jaeger, 5th SF, (Sp?) commanded the 2d MSF Bn Operation; CPT Bohdan Prehar commanded A 1-92FA and his First Sergeant Bobbie Pope; and CPT Moen, Fire Support Liaison Officer and SP5 Brown, Fire Support Liaison NCO and both were from S-3 section, HQ 4 BN 42 FA.

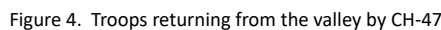
The search and destroy operation was designed to seek out the enemy in an area that they had occupied in the Plei Trap valley and neighboring mountains that runs parallel to the Cambodian border 23 KM north of the Plei Djereng. There were numerous 4th Infantry Division operations and locations in this valley over the years, but it was normally dominated by the NVA operating from large, secure bases just across the border in Cambodia. When U.S. forces engaged the NVA in this valley area, they normally had the upper hand. It was essentially their "turf" as US forces conducted operations for a short period of time and then returned to a base camp. It appeared that the NVA would simply disengage, hide in caves, or could slip back across the Cambodian border and wait to fight another day. If they went across the border, current rules of engagement (ROE) prevented U.S. Forces from pursuing them or even firing artillery across the border without clearance from higher quarters. This was a rugged valley, it was heavily foliated, and at the extreme range of artillery support from other firebases. It was believed that there was training areas, hospitals, storage facilities, and staging areas for a large contingent of the NVA as well as coordination with the VC.

The operation went off smoothly and the MSF were inserted in the southern part of the valley west and slightly north of LZ IMPOSSIBLE and headed north towards LZ Cider (). The members of 2d MSF were very efficient and effective. It is difficult to predict the circumstances faced when working with indigenous forces like the MSF as they have differing set of values and loyalty can vary. During the operation, weather inhibited normal resupply of food and water and the delay was significant. A tactical emergency resupply (TAC-E) in the vicinity

The MSF ate a special ration known as PIR that was developed in 1964 by a civilian supply officer, Conrad Baker, who worked for the 5th SF Group in Vietnam. In some ways it was that was similar to our long-range patrol (LRP) rations, but they were rice-based with dried vegetables and protein in the form of dried shrimp and squid. It also contained a potent packet of very hot pepper. All you needed to do was add hot water and season to taste. They were an interesting change from our LRP and C-Rations. I thought of them as an option of a hot spicy dish, and like LRP's gave me the semblance of a hot meal in mermite containers with some of LBJ's



Upon return of the MSF soldiers to LZ IMPOSIBLE, I observed both a tragedy and act of heroism. One of the MSF troops that exited the CH-47 and moved away



from the chopper to sit down and rest about 20 feet from where a group of us were standing. While removing his rucksack one of the grenades that he had on the harness fell off. Unfortunately, he had loosened the grenade pin as many soldiers do to make it easier to throw. As this grenade popped loose from the harness and tumbled to the grounds--it was live, and it exploded.

Without a second thought, this MSF soldier threw himself on the grenade and he was immediately blown apart. I never learned his name, but his actions saved many soldiers (including me) that were standing close by from injury or worse. Despite his heroic action, there were still a few individuals that received minor fragments wounds. One was an SF specialist (SP6 Craig?) that was standing next LTC Fiore, the 2d BDE XO who had come to congratulate the team for a successful operation, and me.

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