tasked to reduce the stronghold and after three days of continuous, hard fighting, the broken remains of the 22nd Regiment hurriedly departed, leaving 313 dead behind.

Meanwhile, the 1st Brigade had replaced the 3rd Brigade in the Kim Son Valley and continued to maintain pressure on the enemy there. A major contact in one tributary valley deprived the 18th NVA Regiment of its 12.7 millimeter anti-aircraft guns and its recoilless rifles and most of the personnel in its heavy weapons company.

The fifth phase of the campaign, from March 1st to the 6th, was aimed at destroying the enemy forces in the Cay Giep mountains to the east and south of Bong Son. This phase ended with 50 enemy killed and another 30 captured.

When MASHER/WHITE WING terminated March 6 the bulk of the Cav's forces were back in the area south of Bong Son where the first phase had started 41 days earlier. The division had operated in 360 degrees around Bong Son in which enemy contact was maintained during each of the 41 days. The campaign also dissipated any residual doubts about the airmobile division's capability to conduct sustained operations under adverse weather conditions and at substantial distances from a base camp. The campaign proved beyond a doubt that the victory scored in the Pleiku Campaign was no fluke.

The statistics of the operations are impressive: 1,342 enemy killed by the Cav, with an additional 808 killed by Free World Forces. Five of the nine enemy battalions engaged were rendered ineffective and three field hospitals had been captured.

From March through April the FIRST TEAM ran several battalion and brigade-size operations. While heavy contact with resultant enemy losses was minimal, the division gained valuable intelligence of infiltration routes and rest stations as well as uncovering a few sizable caches.

While two of these operations were in progress—LEWIS and CLARK and DAVY CROCKETT, the airmobile division experienced its first change of command. MG Kinnard, who pioneered the air assault concept with the 11th Air Assault Division at Fort Benning, and who brilliantly led the 1st Air Cavalry Division in its first months in Vietnam, relinquished command to Major General John Norton.

On the 6th of May, MG Norton trooped the line of colors and a new era for the division began. MG Norton was no stranger to the Cav, nor to the airmobile concept. He served with the FIRST TEAM in Korea in 1959-60 as a battle group commander and, in 1962 as the Army Aviation Officer for Contin-
From personnel and logistic stand-three planners had beginning a 17-month oriented into the division in mid-June, THAYER 1 took over as commander of MACV Support Command, the forerunner of U.S. Army Vietnam.

Operation CRAZY HORSE kicked off on May 16th, scarcely giving the new Cav chief time to get unpacked. When the operation, which was centered in the mountains between the Vinh Thanh and Soui Ca valleys, ended on June 5th, a total of 507 enemy from the Yellow Star division were dead. There was tragedy too. Sam Castan, a senior editor of Look Magazine, was killed while on assignment with the 1st Brigade. Of the hundreds of correspondents who have covered the FIRST TEAM since its arrival in Vietnam, Mr. Castan is the only one to have lost his life while on assignment with the division.

During a 90-day period, beginning in mid-June, the "old" FIRST TEAM rotated back to the United States and new replacements, eager to become part of this famous team, arrived, were oriented and integrated into the fold. From a personnel and logistic standpoint, the rotation was a task of the first magnitude. Although attrition had pared the division's rotational hump somewhat, there still were 12,000 Skytroopers due to DEROS during this period.

The smooth flow of replacements in and veterans out was handled with a shuttle of Air Force C-141 Starlifters between Travis Air Force Base, California, and Pleiku. The Cav established a liaison office at Travis and handled all outsourcing at Pleiku, thus bypassing normal replacement depot channels.

Operations DECKHOUSE and NATHAN HALE in the area around Tuy Hoa in Phu Yen Province, followed by HENRY CLAY in Phu Bon and Darlac Provinces gave the division ample opportunity to weld the newcomers into a finely tuned airborne machine. By August the Cav was ready to return to its old haunts in the Ia Drang-Chu Pong area for the fourth time in less than a year.

Operation PAUL REVERE II followed the now-familiar pattern of extensive search and maneuver interspersed with brief periods of intense contact. Since the division had been in the area three times previously planners had a pretty good idea of what to expect of both enemy and the terrain. It was the weather, however, that was unexpected and unusually severe. MG Norton described it as some of the worst weather he had ever seen for airborne operations. Only a few hours a day were available for lift and resupply and even during these periods flying was hazardous.

But despite the hazards the Cav fought on, and when the operation drew to a close the enemy had lost 861 men to Allied Forces. As PAUL REVERE terminated, a task force with the 2nd Bn, 7th Cav, was formed and placed under the operational control of IFFORCEV on Operation BYRD. The task force was sent to the southernmost part of II Corps Tactical Zone to support the Vietnamese Revolutionary Development Program in Phan Thiet. This task force remained on this mission through the close of 1966.

On the 13th of September, the division's organization day, THAYER I kicked off with five infantry battalions combat assaulting into a circular configuration around the Crow's Foot area. It was the beginning of a 17-month
campaign to pacify Binh Dinh Province.

The battalions did not make major troop contact, but did dig up significant caches and, more importantly, by staying and dominating the valley, prevented the enemy from using the bases he needed to stay combat effective.

Other 1st Air Cav units meanwhile had moved east from the valleys and maneuvered into position to trap the enemy in a coastal pocket. There evolved Operation IRVING, which, in a sense, was a battlefield within a much larger battlefield. Because of the tight cordon maintained, the enemy had two choices: to stand and fight or try to exfiltrate. In either case he lost.

In 22 days the FIRST TEAM, working with Free World Forces, compiled some overwhelming statistics. In both operations, the enemy had lost 2,063 killed, 1,930 captured and returned 141 to GVN control. In particular, IRVING was unique in that the Cav captured, interrogated and processed more enemy than in any previous operation. Also, for the first time since the division began operations in Vietnam, the number of enemy captured exceeded the number killed.

THAYER II was but a logical extension of the preceding operations in the Bong Son area as part of the all-out effort to pacify eastern Binh Dinh Province. Division forces in these operations ranged from a brigade with two maneuver battalions to three brigades with eight battalions. The division now boasted nine battalions, with the 5th Battalion, 7th Cavalry, having joined the FIRST TEAM from Fort Carson, Colorado.

The Christmas truce ended violently when in the early morning of December 27, LZ Bird in the Kim Son Valley erupted with mortar and small arms fire. The 22nd NVA Regiment had taken advantage of the truce to move into position around the LZ. The attack was pressed hard but in the end the 22nd lost more than 200 killed.

The year 1966 closed during the second two-day truce period around the U.S. New Year. On December 31st, THAYER II was in its 68th day, the longest operation undertaken by the division in Vietnam. It was to last considerably longer.

1967

The new year of 1967 began for the 1st Cavalry with a new approach to its enemy. In 16 months of being chased and chopped by a relentless air assault cavalry, the enemy became reluctant to meet the FIRST TEAM head-on. The enemy was loathe to show himself in massed forces. He slipped into elusiveness. He began to spread out and spread thin. The division countered by easing off on its chase. Instead, the Cavmen were prepositioned near known enemy haunts; platoon ambushes were widespread and frequent and long range patrols overwatched principal enemy locations while “stirring forces” were used to generate enemy movement, to mix his simmering pot of activity. The enemy was prodded and herded into “coming to us.”

Operation THAYER II lingered through January and saw the 1st Cavalry straddling a large II Corps area. The 1st

A convoy (left) fords the shallow An Long River as the trucks make their way toward Camp Evans in I Corps.

“Garry Owen” troopers of Company D, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry, dash toward the helicopter that will carry them to yet another location. Once there they will search near Khe Sanh, as part of Operation PEGASUS. The action occurred in April 1968.
Brigade was stirring enemy action in the central and southern Kim Son Valley. The 2nd Brigade beat the bush to flush enemy troops in northern Kim Son, the Crescent Area and in the Nui Mieu and Cay Giep mountains.

The heaviest January contact came on the 27th northeast of Bong Son when elements of the 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry, air assaulted on top of an NVA battalion. By dark they had been reinforced with four rifle companies, two platoons from the 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry, and elements of the ARVN and Vietnamese Marines. The fight flared and flashed through the night. At dawn the Allied soldiers rose to sweep the area and finish off pockets of resistance. Seventy-two enemy lay dead and 11 were taken prisoner.

THAYER II was the division's longest operation to that date in Vietnam—111 days. In the end, when the operation was finished and tallied, the division's soldiers had killed 1,757 enemy soldiers in that time.

From February to the end of April the division was able to concentrate its forces for the first time in the pacification of a single province. The division began dominating the lush, densely populated Binh Dinh Province with Operation PERSHING after THAYER II terminated February 11. Main force enemy units were encountered primarily on the Bong Son Plain and in the An Lao Valley. Under Cav pressure North Vietnamese and Viet Cong units were eventually forced to withdraw into Quang Ngai Province north of the II Corps boundary. With PERSHING began the Phase IV of the Binh Dinh Pacification Campaign.

When the enemy had been driven back into his base areas north of the province border in April, the 2nd Brigade’s two battalions were deployed for the first time outside II Corps to conduct Mission LEJEUNE. In 16 days of fighting along the coast, they killed 176 enemy soldiers.

When PERSHING was launched on February 12, the rich rice areas were to see the first signs of waning Communist control. It had been an area dosed in the list of Communist domination, but when PERSHING ended in January 1968, that grip had been pried open and wrested loose.

The first division-size operation conducted by the FIRST TEAM, PERSHING pitted the Army’s unique airmobile division against the 3rd North Viet-
namese Army Division, a match which cost the Communists more than 6,000 killed.

Suffering from earlier defeats, the enemy refused to actively engage the Skytroopers, but he was hounded relentlessly as the division dogged his footsteps. Only once would the enemy stand and fight, at Tam Quan in December, and then he would lose 650 men from the 22nd NVA Regiment.

Operation PERSHING was largely unglamorous. The division began the monotonous task of cordon and search operations that would break the VC political stronghold in the villages. The division’s capabilities were greatly enhanced by the attachment of three companies from the 816th National Police Field Force (NPFF). Elements of the division conducted pre-dawn cordons and the NPFF would sweep through and search villages and hamlets for VC. The process of physically rooting out the Viet Cong had begun. Some 2,400 of the enemy were detained during the year.

While the day-to-day footwork of the infantry lacked glamour, the spectacular flying of the 1st Sqdn, 9th Cav, and the brigade scout helicopters made its job easier. As the NVA rice gathering elements attempted to steal crops, reconnaissance helicopters engaged them and a pattern of aerial death was established. After being spotted, the enemy could expect aerial rocket artillery, tube artillery, infantry, and the slashing miniguns of gunships to descend on them.

The 1st Sqdn, 9th Cav, with its ability to react immediately to any situation, accounted for 38 percent of the division’s kills during Operation PERSHING, cutting down some 1,700 of the enemy, and maintaining a kill ratio of 38 to 1. Additionally, it detained 602 enemy soldiers and captured 203 weapons.

Important rice production areas were closed to the enemy. In the An Lao Valley thousands of refugees were relocated from the area, depriving the NVA and VC those crops. The Kim Son and Suoi Ca were also made denial areas, forcing the enemy into the plains to find food. Denial areas were pounded by artillery at night, making rice gathering after dark a dangerous proposition.

Though only 18 major engagements were made during PERSHING, the division took a heavy toll of the enemy as gunships caught food producing units moving down from the mountains. As hunger gripped the NVA, entire companies and battalions attempted to leave their hiding places for the lowlands and were interdicted by swift movements of the Skytroopers.

As the pacification program pace increased, the division physically blocked VC attempts to regain influence in the villages. The PERSHING area of operations extended over 1,600 square miles and the FIRST TEAM’s ability to hold such a large area displayed the capabilities of a well-deployed airborne division. Major General John J. Tolson took the reins of command from MG Norton in April. A career soldier for 31 years, the new “First Skytrooper” participated in every jump the 503rd Parachute Infantry Battalion made in World War II, including the recapture of Corregidor in 1945. He also was an Army Aviator of long standing.

May 31 saw 96 of the enemy from the 9th Battalion, 22nd Regiment, killed as they came west down from the mountains to the Bong Son Plain near An Qui. In June both the 2nd VC Regiment and the 18th NVA Regiment took heavy losses near the Dam Tra-O Lake and the Suoi Ca.

By early summer the 1st Cavalry Division faced a highly demoralized enemy. Hoi Chanhs and detainees spoke of the terror that ARA and armed helicopters wrought and of the rapid decay of morale among the VC and NVA cadre.

The 1st Battalion (Mech), 50th Infantry, joined the division in September, providing a heavy punch against heavily fortified emplacements as their APCs
rumbled against the NVA in the 506 Valley, Dam Tra-O Lake, Suoi Ca and
Bong Son Plains in a quick introduction
to combat for the fresh-from-the-states
mechanized battalion.

The 6th to the 20th of December saw
the 1st Brigade return from Operation
MACARTHUR at Dak To to engage
the 2nd NVA Regiment in the much
publicized battle near Tam Quan.

Two scout helicopters from the 1st
of the 9th spotted a hut sporting an
antenna and, when they wheeled to
investigate, were engaged by machine-
gun fire. Two infantry Platoons from
the squadron were inserted and quickly
became heavily engaged.

The division’s quick reaction force,
Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 8th
Cavalry, air assaulted into the area and
was later joined by the 1st of the 50th
APCs, which proved to be the equalizer
for assaulting the bunkers and entrench-
ments of the NVA.

The 40th ARVN Regiment blocked
to the north and south of the enemy
headquarters at Dai Dong Village and
elements of the 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry,
became assaulting the fortifications of the
village.

Returning from Dak To, the 1st Bat-
talion, 12th Cavalry, kept the pressure on
the 22nd Regiment, and the Skystroopers
overran the fleeing command post.

As the enemy slipped back to the Cay
Geip mountains the 2nd Bn, 8th Cav,
got a new fix on the NVA across the
Bong Son River and quickly engaged
the remnants of the 22nd Regimental
Headquarters. Allied forces had killed
661 enemy.

The Army Chief of Staff, General
Harold K. Johnson, visited the Tam
Quan battle site and highly praised the
1st Brigade and the 40th ARVN Regi-
ment for their ability to take the battle
to the enemy, disrupting the NVA’s
plans for the Tet Offensive in the Bong
Son Plains and for the exceptional per-
formance of the FIRST TEAM in
Operation PERSHING.

Vietnamese civilians, most of whom
had been raised under the Viet Cong,
witnessed a great transition as Opera-
tion PERSHING crushed the VC.
Under the direction of the Saigon gov-
ernment, elections were held for the
first time on September 3, with 95.7
percent of the registered voters in the
PERSHING AO participating, against
81 percent nationwide. Schools, hospitals
and refugee centers were constructed.
Perhaps of more importance, Highway
1 was opened for commerce through Binh
Dinh for the first time in many years.

When the 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry,
arrived in Binh Thuan Province, the
southernmost province in II Corps, at
the end of August 1966, the entire area
was in danger of falling into the hands
of two Viet Cong battalions. The govern-
ment had receded to the immediate area
of Phan Thiet, the province capital
and the center of profitable fishing and fish
sauce manufacturing industries. Cavalry-
men were committed to mission BYRD.

Of unique political significance was
the fact that Ho Chi Minh had once
taught school in Phan Thiet.

Sixteen months later the “Garry
Owen” troopers had run up a body count
of 929 enemy, while losing only 39 of
their own men.

More importantly, they had cleared
the populous “triangle” area north and
west of Phan Thiet for Government of
Vietnam administrators to begin develop-
ment work on a dozen “New Life”
hamlets.

The roads around Phan Thiet opened
gradually as the battalion’s operations
fanned out from the capital. Perhaps the
biggest success of BYRD’s last two
months (which ended in mid-January
1968) was the reopening of Highway 1.

Lieutenant Colonel Joseph T. Griffin,
the battalion commander, recalled the
effect of the road’s opening. “The word
spread like wildfire. Shops along the
highway suddenly came to life again with
goods sent up from the south, and lobster,
fish and fish sauce were on the way to
Saigon by truck.”

A task force from the 2nd Bn, 8th
Cav, participated in BOLLING Septem-
ber 17 through October 14 west of Tuy
Hoa. Contact was scattered with the
Skystroopers accounting for 21 enemy
killed during the period.

The division’s 3rd Brigade entered
Quang Tin and Quang Nam provinces
during the first week in October for a
three and a half month stay that ultim-
ately cost the 2nd North Vietnamese
Army more than 2,400 men killed. Three
times during the operation 20 or more
Viet Cong became Hoi Chans due to
the relentlessness of Cavalry air and
ground pressure.

The 3rd Brigade began the 125 mile
move north from its Binh Dinh Province
headquarters on October 2 into an area
20 miles southwest of Da Nang, begin-
ing Operation WHEELER/WAL-
LOWA.

The NVA never knew what hit them.
Cavalry companies popped up all over
the area, decimating the North Viet-

Skytroopers check part of an enemy weapons
cache, one of many captured by the division
during Operation JEB STUART III. This
cache contained Communist mortar and
rocket rounds.
namese that tried to escape. Cav helicopters and gunships from the 1st Sqdn, 9th Cav, created havoc among their ranks.

"On my first day flying here," recalled Major Lewis B. Beasley, then B Troop's commander, "I saw a column of NVA walking in the open with weapons and packs. I knew we were going to do some business in this area."

When the operation was three months old, B Troop had killed 834 NVA, roughly half a regiment, while losing three men. Airmobile infantry tactics brought similar results.

1968

The 1st Air Cav has never had an easy year in Vietnam, or a year when it wasn't at the forefront of Allied actions. Even so, it would be hard to find a year that exceeded 1968 for operations that made news, made history and, most importantly, made life tough for the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong. From the walls of Hue to the jungles of III Corps, Skystroopers relentlessly pursued the enemy.

The division began 1968 by terminating Operation PERSHING, the longest of the 1st Cav's Vietnam actions. For nearly a year the division scoured the Bong Son Plain, An Lao Valley and the hills of coastal I Corps, seeking out enemy units and their sanctuaries. When the operation ended on January 21, the enemy had lost 5,401 soldiers and 2,400 had been detained. Some 1,300 individual and 137 crew served weapons had been captured or destroyed. With PERSHING concluded, it was time for the division to move.

The new area of operations for the Cav was in eastern I Corps, Vietnam's northern most tactical zone. Camp Evans, north of Hue, was the division's new basecamp. As the 2nd Brigade continued actions against the enemy in the old PERSHING AO, the rest of the division began Operation JEB STUART.

JEB STUART started as a normal operation. The enemy made it something special when they launched their Tet Offensive in late January. Some 7,000 enemy, primarily well-equipped, crack NVA regulars, had blasted their way into the imperial city of Hue, occupying all but a few strongpoints held by U.S. Marine and ARVN forces. To the north a sapper platoon penetrated Quang Tri, the capital of Vietnam's northernmost province. They initiated acts of sabotage and terrorism early in the morning of January 31. Two hours later five battalions of NVA and VC assaulted the city.

The division's 1st Brigade had been located to the south and west of Quang Tri when the attacks began. From 4 a.m. to noon on January 31 ARVN troops successfully resisted the enemy attacks, but the resources of the Vietnamese soldiers were being strained to the limit. At noon the 1st Brigade was called in. By four in the afternoon the Cavalrymen were helicoptered to landing zones near enemy infiltration and support positions.

Three companies assaulted into LZs around the village of Thon An Thai, east of Quang Tri. All elements received heavy enemy fire initially, but the Sky-
troopers couldn't be stopped.

The heavy weapons support of the NVA battalion to the east of Quang Tri was nullified. In a closing vise between ARVN and 1st Cav forces, the enemy unit began splitting into small elements to escape.

The ground troops and the hard hitting aerial rocket artillery created pandemonium in the ranks of those enemy who had moved up alongside Highway I for the attack.

As the day darkened, the shattered Communists strove to break contact on all fronts and withdrew. They dissolved into small groups. Fighting erupted through the night as they were spotted.

By noon on February 1, Quang Tri City was cleared of the enemy. The 1st Brigade immediately initiated a pursuit that continued through the first 10 days of February. During the week that started with the enemy attack the 1st Brigade killed 381 enemy, while losing only four of its own men.

The 3rd Brigade was given the assignment of driving the enemy from Hue and its environs. That effort began on February 2 when helicopters, flying at tree-top level because of fog, air assaulted the 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry, just outside PK-17, an ARVN outpost 10 kilometers northwest of Hue. Advancing on February 5, the battalion spotted enemy soldiers on the other side of a broad rice paddy in the hamlet of Thon La Chu.

During the next hours the battalion moved across the paddy and was soon in a savage firefight with nearly 1,000 NVA soldiers in the hamlet. The battalion's officers called for artillery support but it was not available for several hours. Two aerial rocket artillery helicopters braved the dense fog to spew 2.75-inch rockets at NVA positions. This permitted battalion elements to
occupy trenches abandoned by NVA guards, but a reinforced NVA battalion in bunkers put out a devastating fire from small arms, heavy machineguns and mortars. For two days fire and counterfire ripped the air between the two positions, as lack of food, water and sleep added to the Skytroopers’ discomfort.

At 8 p.m. February 4 the battalion undertook a daring night march to outflank the enemy. At six the next morning the battalion’s soldiers climbed a hill overlooking the valley surrounding the hamlet. The battalion now was behind the enemy and in a position to overlook and interdict his movements.

By February 11 the enemy was blocked on the north and on the south. A night patrol behind enemy lines convinced the battalion’s officers that the enemy on the south was too strong to attack. After an assault on the north met with only limited success, the 3rd Brigade waited until February 21 to try again, and then the Cavalrymen moved swiftly through the hamlet. On February 22 the battalion finished sweeping Thon La Chu. The battle had disrupted an important enemy headquarters and severed a major NVA and VC supply and reinforcement route.

With the sweep of the hamlet finished the final push to Hue began. The 2nd of the 12th moved at night, getting within three kilometers of Hue when the NVA opened up with automatic weapons, rockets, recoilless rifles and mortars. During the next two days the battalion was in almost constant contact as it moved toward the city. The 5th Battalion, 7th Cavalry, was pinned down by heavy enemy fire a kilometer from Hue. After artillery pounded the position, the battalion moved past it the next day, meeting its Bravo Company, which had been airlifted inside the city. The northwest wall of Hue was secure.

The 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry, broke through heavy resistance to meet its fellow “Garry Owen” battalion at the southwest wall. With this part of the wall secured, enemy resistance in the city collapsed, although the pursuit of the fleeing enemy continued for several days. By the end of the operation the 3rd Brigade had killed 404 enemy, 359 of them NVA. Bravo Troop, 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry, accounted for another 156 enemy.

Three days after the 3rd Brigade finished its operations in Hue, the 2nd Brigade completed Operation PERSH-ING II. The brigade then joined the rest of the division in I Corps where throughout March the Skytroopers pursued the shattered forces that were the remnants of the enemy’s dreams for a Tet victory.

Before the month was over the division received a new challenge: Drive the enemy from the hills around the Marine base at Khe Sanh and reestablish an overland supply route to the embattled outpost. For months the enemy had cut off Highway 9, forcing all supplies to come by air to the Marines, who also suffered constant pounding from NVA artillery in Laos.

The 1st Sqn, 9th Cav, was the first division unit to enter the valley. 2nd and 1st Brigades and a three battalion ARVN force were air assaulted south and west of the Marine base. A total of 15,000 men were deployed in the valley.

The 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry, fighting its way to Khe Sanh to take over the defense of the base, battled for four days against an enemy force entrenched in positions it had been fortifying for months. The enemy finally left 94 bodies and more than 70 weapons on the battlefield. The battalion marched into its objective to the cheers of Marines, and put up a sign: “Khe Sanh under new management.”

Although the Khe Sanh post had been reached, the operation wasn’t over. In

Unaffected by the message given them by the enemy, these Cavalrymen display their find with pride. The signs were contained in a weapons and food cache discovered during an operation in III Corps, 1969.

The squadron’s helicopters flew into the valley March 26, and the NVA greeted them with heavy anti-aircraft fire. The NVA fire was self-defeating, for in addition to general reconnaissance the squadron had been assigned the task of seeking out anti-aircraft positions and directing artillery and air strikes to destroy them before the division assaulted in force.

Operation PEGASUS, as the action was named, officially started April 1 when dozens of helicopters carried the 3rd Brigade into a series of landing zones within five miles of Khe Sanh. Not a shot was fired at any of them, so efficient had been the work of the 1st Sqn, 9th Cav. At two day intervals, the one action 1st of the 9th gunships killed 50 NVA. The two 1st Brigade battalions that landed on LZ Snapper April 5 had several sharp fights as they pushed north toward Khe Sanh and then west toward the Laotian border and the CIDG Camp at Lang Vei. The camp, captured by the NVA in March, was retaken by the 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry, after a day of fighting. The 1st Brigade also discovered numerous supply caches, including one stockpile of 50,000 rounds of AK-47 ammo and 1,600 mixed mortar rounds.

The division’s artillery batteries slammed tens of thousands of rounds into enemy positions during PEGASUS. An almost unbelievable 500 tons of ammunition a day was hauled by the 228th
Assault Support Helicopter Battalion to feed the guns. The enemy's heavy artillery in Laos shelled LZ Stud, the division forward command post, and once the 2nd Brigade's LZ Tom. Both times enemy observer teams were spotted in the hills. After division artillery was turned on them, the shellings stopped.

Operation PEGASUS ended April 15. The division and its opcon units had relieved Khe Sanh, killed 1,259 enemy and captured 540 individual and 216 crew-served weapons.

Yet another major operation was waiting for the division. The A Shau Valley is a silt in the mountains 45 kilometers west of Hue. Close to the Laotian border, remote and usually hidden from the air by thick clouds, the valley was a major way-station on the Ho Chi Minh trail, a North Vietnamese Army base and was the jumping-off point for the enemy's Tet Offensive against Hue. Since a CIDG camp pulled out of the area in 1966, no Free World Forces had penetrated the valley.

Operation DELAWARE, as the division's invasion of the valley was named, changed all this. The men of the 1st and 3rd Brigades began to enter the valley on April 19. Mobile 37 mm guns camouflaged in the jungle and capable of hitting targets at an altitude of 25,000 feet poured out their fire, and .50 caliber machineguns added a wall of red tracers. Despite the resistance, the division's battalions successfully secured landing zones.

The three Garry Owen battalions hit the valley first. An overturned truck loaded with 200 rifles was found on April 20. This was the first indication that Operation DELAWARE would be a gigantic treasure hunt, punctuated by small, sharp clashes with scattered enemy units.

On April 24 the 1st Brigade seized the A Luoi airstrip, clearing the long unused field so vital resupply could come by air. The strip was renamed LZ Stallion. On the 25th the men on Stallion heard the rumble of a truck motor. From the north bounced a green vehicle, covered with waving Skytroopers. They had found five Russian-made trucks and driven one back.

As the days went by the finds mounted: Huge arms caches, more trucks, food, uniforms, rockets, gasoline. Exploring one cache on April 29 a company came under fire from an enemy tank. It knocked out the position with two light antitank weapon (LAW) rounds.

During May the two brigades criss-crossed the valley floor and searched out its corners, uncovering more supplies at every turn. On May 17 the operation ended as the brigades moved back to Camp Evans. What the enemy had regarded as an inviolable sanctuary had been raided by the FIRST TEAM, who had destroyed the enemy's bunkers and fortifications and stripped the valley of his supplies. The division had captured or destroyed 2,371 individual weapons, 13 anti-aircraft weapons, 42,000 large caliber rounds, 169,000 small arms rounds, 40 tons of food, two bulldozers, 73 wheeled vehicles, three tracked vehicles and a tank. In addition 737 enemy soldiers were killed.

Command of the division was passed
As the 1st Infantry Division moved Charlie was already feeling the pinch. Hue, Quang Tri, Khe Sanh, A Shau, sporadic action continued in December. By November 9, the 1st Air Cavalry was coming fast. The rest of the Cav was coming fast.

Major General George I. Forsythe replaced BG Irby as division commander on August 19. MG Forsythe came to the division from MACV, where he was assistant to the deputy commander for CORDS. The general started his military career in World War II, first as an infantry officer in the Pacific and later in Europe, where he helped plan the Allied invasion. As a colonel, he commanded the 502nd Airborne Infantry in 1956 and 1957. His first tour in Vietnam came in 1958 when he was the first senior advisor to the ARVN Field Command. He earned his first star in 1963 and became a major general in 1966. Like his predecessors, he was an aviator, but unlike them, he had earned his wings just prior to taking command of the division.

On October 25, the 1st Air Cavalry Division area of operations was quiet. At Camp Evans, in the brigade bases, in isolated forward positions, Skytroopers looked out over an expanse of "Cav Country" they had tamed in nine months of bitter fighting. They had seized NVA caches in the razor-sharp, jungled mountains bordering the A Shau Valley. They had crippled the VC infrastructure and denied the enemy rice and recruits on the sandy, half-flooded plain between Hue and Quang Tri. They had provided safety and shelter for refugees. Charlie was on the run.

During the summer there had been rumors of a move. But no rumors were current when the order came to move the whole division—more than 19,000 men, hundreds of vehicles and helicopters, tons of supplies—south to a new area of operations northwest of Saigon. The Cav moved. The equivalent of a medium-sized U.S. town tore itself up by the roots, took wings, and landed at the other end of South Vietnam. Within days, the division was conducting combat operations in III Corps; within two weeks, everything was back to normal. Supplies were circulating. Paperwork flowed. And the enemy, once again, was on the run.

During the move, the division had to fight on two fronts 350 miles apart, overcoming staggering problems of control. Three operations were in progress simultaneously.

The 3rd Brigade spearheaded the advance south. The 1st Brigade remained in the northern provinces until November 3, wrapping up Operation JEB STUART III, which had lasted 171 days and cost the Communists 2,016 men. The 2nd Brigade continued to participate in Operation COMANCHE FALLS in the jungle 25 miles from the DMZ. With elements of the 1st ARVN Division and the 5th Infantry Division, the Blackhorse troopers formed a cordon 16 kilometers in circumference around the My Chanh District to weed out the enemy soldiers. On November 14, Cavalry firepower helped the 3rd Battalion, 36th ARVN Rangers, repel an NVA assault on LZ Dot with almost 300 enemy killed. After a month in III Corps, the division by itself had accounted for more than 1,100 VC and NVA dead. Large bunker complexes stocked with munitions had been uncovered with a base at Quan Loi. The I st Brigade occupied the northeastern section of the new AO, with a base at Quan Loi. The 1st Brigade followed, funneling through Quan Loi and establishing bases to the southwest, in the Tay Ninh area. The 2nd Brigade came last, taking up a central position between the other two brigades. The new division base was established at Phuoc Vinh. Altogether, the FIRST TEAM assumed areas of responsibility in the provinces of Phuoc Long, Binh Long, Tay Ninh, and Binh Duong.

The move was clearly a logistical triumph. By the evening of October 31, 2,600 men and 61 helicopters had arrived in Quan Loi. By November 10, 3,785 air sorties had been flown from Camp Evans with more than 9,200 men aboard. Some 3,600 tons of vehicles and equipment had moved by air. The Navy's LSTs had carried 2,800 passengers, 11,000 tons of equipment, 1,750 wheeled vehicles, and 27 helicopters. The rest of the Cav was coming fast.

As the 1st Infantry Division moved out of its bases, the Skytroopers moved in, setting up communications networks, making contact with ARVN units and Special Forces-advised CIDG groups, and learning as much as possible about the local enemy.

Charlie was already feeling the pinch, despite his sanctuary in nearby Cambodia. By November 9, the 1st Air Cav, joining other Allied units in the Toan Thang offensive, had killed 109 enemy soldiers. On November 14, Cavalry firepower helped the 3rd Battalion, 36th ARVN Rangers, repel an NVA assault on LZ Dot with almost 300 enemy killed. After a month in III Corps, the division by itself had accounted for more than 1,100 VC and NVA dead. Large bunker complexes stocked with munitions had been uncovered around Loc Ninh and along the Saigon River. ARA and tube artillery disrupted traffic on the enemy's major supply routes.

Sporadic action continued in December. Forty-five enemy were killed by Allied units on December 4; 50,000 rounds of ammo were captured December 8; 46 enemy died on December 9; 42 lost their lives on December 18; 18,000 pounds of rice were seized December 21; and in a flurry of action after Christmas 155 VC and NVA were killed.

Hue, Quang Tri, Khe Sanh, A Shau, III Corps. The Cav was used to fighting and important victories, but 1968 was, even by Cav standards, a year of unique achievement in the face of unusual challenge.

(Continued on P. 247)
INFANTRY
The unit was constituted in the Regular Army as the 1st Brigade August 29, 1917, and organized in February 1918 at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, as an element of the 15th Cavalry Division.

Campaign participation credit was earned in World War II, including the New Guinea, Bismarck (with arrowhead), Leyte (with arrowhead) and Luzon Campaigns.

The 1st Brigade prior to the Vietnam conflict had been decorated with the Presidential Unit Citation, streamer embroidered LUZON; and the Philippine Presidential Unit Citation for October 17, 1944 through July 4, 1945.

On September 20, 1965, the 1st Cavalry Division's 1st Brigade debarked from the troop ship USNS Geiger and marched ashore at the city of Qui Nhơn, Republic of Vietnam. In its ranks were three airborne infantry battalions, the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 8th Cavalry and the 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry, with a direct support artillery battalion, the 2nd Battalion, 19th Artillery. The brigade did not tarry but loaded quickly into helicopters and moved inland to the division's basecamp at An Khe.

The men of the brigade entered the Vietnam war with the flavor and traditions of airborne troopers—the brigade's slogan “All the Way” stems from its early airborne status—and they would need all the spirit and determination implied in that slogan in the coming months. It had been the last of the three brigades of the Cav to be organized, owing to the difficulty in filling it with qualified airborne personnel, and the last replacements had arrived just before the unit had departed Fort Benning for combat. Many of the companies, Platoons and squads had never been in the field together, but their commander, Colonel E. B. Roberts, had faith in the airborne spirit and knew that it would sustain them through the first difficult months in Vietnam.

It was not long after the brigade's arrival before that spirit was tested. An enemy attack on the Special Forces Camp at Plei Me set the stage for the brigade's first trial by fire which was later to be known as the Pleiku Campaign of October 23—November 9, 1965. In a series of massive search and destroy operations kicked off with Operation ALL THE WAY, 1st Brigade units air assaulted to support an ARVN relief column winding toward the besieged camp. When the enemy's encirclement had been broken and his units began withdrawing, the brigade forward command post at LZ Homecoming was visited by General William C. Westmoreland and the order of the day was changed. Lieutenant Colonel Harlow G. Clark, then the acting commander of the brigade in COL Robert's temporary absence, was to conduct a brilliant pursuit campaign with this new concept called air mobility. As the retreating 3rd NVA Regiment raced overland for Cambodia and sanctuary, LTC Clark's men made daily air assaults to catch and cut into the fleeing enemy, smashing chunks out of his strength as he tried to get out from under the blanket of the
It was hard, exhausting work. During this time the brigade's tactical area of operations covered more than 1,200 square miles of tangled jungle, and that was a lot of territory for Charlie to get lost in. But the pursuit kept track of him; artillery batteries were leap-frogged forward by Chinook helicopters to provide support as the infantry was constantly air assualting into positions blocking the enemy's path.

If the drive was relentless and exhausting for the 1st Brigade, it was far worse for the harried and much less mobile enemy. By November 9, when the All the Way Brigade gave up its AO to the fresh 3rd Brigade, the 33rd Regiment had lost 826 men killed and another 119 captured by LTC Clark's troops.

The next challenge the 1st Brigade was to face was Operation MASHER/WHITE WING, a tactical program which spanned the period from January 29 to March 6, 1966. This operation was destined to evolve into the largest joint-service and Allied operation up to that time in the Vietnam conflict. MASHER/WHITE WING centered on the Bong Son Plain in the eastern portion of Binh Dinh Province along the tidal coast of the South China Sea; it was a campaign that drew virtually every combat and support element of the division into play. For the 1st Brigade the most significant period of the operation began on February 27 with a series of sharp battles fought south of Bong Son along Highway 1.

The enemy forces involved had been threatening the cities of Bong Son, Quang Nai and the vital port city of Qui Nhon, and they were dealt a crippling blow in the less than 40 days of MASHER/WHITE WING.

On March 25 the brigade returned to the Ia Drang Valley for the highly productive Operation LINCOLN. The enemy lost 480 killed and, for the first time, Cav units penetrated the Chu Pong Massif.

In mid-May of that year the brigade had overwatch responsibility for the newly-built CIDG camp in Vinh Thanh Valley, a jungle bowl ringed by mountains just east of An Khe. Thus, when one of the CIDG forces came in contact with an enemy of unknown strength in the mountains it was decided to commit one of the rifle companies from the An Khe base defense force into the area to develop the situation. It was Bravo Company, 2d Bn, 8th Cav, that was selected and the company combat assaulted into an LZ on a mountain ridge overlooking the CIDG Camp. The Skytroopers of Bravo Company wound their way up the ridge to the top of one of the mountains and smashed into an enemy battalion.

This hilltop fight triggered Operation CRAZY HORSE, a campaign that was never designed but which took shape quickly in the heat of a few expedient hours. Exploiting the situation, during the next three days the brigade deployed five maneuver battalions to do battle with what turned out to be the 2nd VC Regiment and the 12th NVA Regiment. The enemy's plan of smashing the CIDG camp in fiery commemoration of Ho Chi Minh's birthday on May 19 desintegrated as the 1st Brigade joined by ARVN and ROK forces, quickly surrounded him and sealed off his escape routes. It was not to be the last time that the Cav, with its ability to react with lightning speed to a promising situation, would smash an enemy plan before it could even get off the ground. Airmobility was coming of age.

When CRAZY HORSE terminated on June 5, 1966, the enemy—who had entered the area and opened the fight with such grandiose plans—had been badly mauled. Skytroopers under the command of the All the Way Brigade had killed some 350 enemy troops, but the capture of a Viet Cong political indoctrination center was a dividend of more lasting importance. The documents taken enabled the national police to put a substantial dent in the VC infrastructure in Binh Dinh Province.

Of passing interest is the operation that had been sidetracked by the impromptu CRAZY HORSE. The brigade planned to conduct a multi-battalion operation which was to have included a battalion-sized combat jump in the area west and south of Tuy Hoa. CRAZY HORSE caused the scrapping of those...
plans, and though the brigade ultimately campaigned in the Tuy Hoa area later in June, the operation was not quite what the brigade planners had envisaged in early May.

The months that followed found the brigade participating in Operations NATHAN HALE and HENRY CLAY. NATHAN HALE brought the 1st Brigade into the Tuy Hoa area in a reaction role, and it was during this period that the "Jumping Mustangs" of the 1st Bn, 8th Cav, won the Presidential Unit Citation.

In the second operation, HENRY CLAY, the brigade experimented with a technique designed to search for the enemy over a wide area with a minimum of forces. This technique was called "saturation patrolling" and it found its first implementation when the 2nd Bn, 8th Cav, was broken down into 54 six-man reconnaissance teams and spread over an area covering 100 square miles.

Following HENRY CLAY the brigade returned to An Khe and the base defense mission in early August and planning commenced for Operation THAYER.

Intelligence reports indicated that elements of the 3rd NVA Division, which was a mixture of VC and NVA units, had moved back into the Kim Son Valley. To counter this threat THAYER was launched on September 13, 1966, with three battalions being air assaulted into positions along the high ground south and west of the Crow's Foot network of valleys along the Kim Son River. The brigade then aggressively sought the enemy out until the operation came to a close on October 1. By this time 191 enemy soldiers had been killed by the lightning strokes and determined fighting of the All the Way Brigade. The enemy was forced from his bases and kept constantly on the move despite his best efforts to stay under cover and minimize losses.

When the enemy realized that he could not remain in the area and continue to sustain the losses he was taking, he looked for a way out. Elements of the Cav were north, west and south of him, so there was only one direction he could go—east, toward the South China Sea and there, unknown to the enemy, the 1st Brigade waited. When this move began exactly...
The brigade's role in MACARTHUR PERSHING terminated on January 18, 1968, as predicted, the brigade met the enemy units, closed in on them, and piled on. It was October 2, 1966, the beginning of the short and furious Operation IRVING. As the enemy force fell into the brigade's blocking force, the first six days of fighting accounted for 397 enemy dead. An incredible figure of 321 enemy soldiers were captured during this week, and by the time the operation was completed on October 24 the numbers of enemy killed and detained had doubled.

One of the problems encountered during IRVING concerned the thousands of civilians endangered by the wave of battle violence. A massive PSYOPs and civic action campaign was launched to forestall this danger and in the end less than 10 civilians had been accidently killed in the 22 days of the operation.

The next major operation in which the brigade participated was PERSHING which began on February 13, 1967 in the Bong Son Plain. The first days were punctuated by actions at Tuy Au on the 18th, Tan An on February 27th, and Hy Van on March 19th. In these and related actions the enemy lost 161 killed and seven were detained by the All the Way Brigade.

Later in the same operation a battalion of the 69th Armor was attached to the infantry and greatly enhanced the effectiveness of the brigade's maneuver units, particularly against fortified positions. Many valuable lessons were also learned about the employment of airborne infantry with armor, and these were to find application time and time again during the later years of the war.

At An Qui the brigade committed three infantry companies from the 2nd Bn, 8th Cav, and the 1st Bn, 12th Cav, with supporting gunships from A Troop, 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry, along with tanks against a battalion of the 3rd NVA Division. The fight that followed left 96 dead enemy soldiers on the battlefield.

In Tuy Au the opposing force was the 8th Battalion of the 22nd NVA Regiment. This time it was the Skytroopers from the 1st Bn, 8th Cav, who met them, and the enemy was driven out of the village and nearby hills with a loss of 86 KIA.

In 1967, for the third time in as many years, large North Vietnamese Army forces infiltrated across the Cambodian and Laotian borders during the month of November to threaten Allied outposts in the highland jungles of Pleiku and Kontum Provinces. On each occasion the 1st Air Cavalry's 1st Brigade was called upon to respond to the threat. The enemy target for 1967 was the large U.S. basecamp at Dak To. A force estimated to be four well equipped regiments had maneuvered into positions around the camp and were being engaged by elements of the 4th Infantry Division and 173rd Airborne Brigade when the first Skytroopers arrived. The 1st Bn, 12th Cav, had been called for rapid deployment to Dak To.

Within 24 hours the battalion had responded and was relieving the beleaguered 4th Division units on Hill 724 west of the Dak To camp, together with a platoon from Company A, 8th Engineer Battalion.

The 1st Brigade headquarters and the 2nd Bn, 8th Cav, soon joined the task force in support of Operation MACARTHUR and together with attached units assumed the responsibility for its own AO.

The fighting was reminiscent of the tactics employed in Korea. Cavalrymen advanced directly behind their supporting fires to push the enemy from the strategic high ground. The men fought through some of the most rugged terrain in Vietnam, crawling through dense bamboo and underbrush to within 10 meters of the enemy position before they could bring effective fire on the Communist soldiers concealed in camouflaged bunkers and lashed to the tall trees.

The brigade's role in MACARTHUR was concluded after only 11 days and the massive attack planned by the Communists never materialized.

The year 1967 ended with the brigade still in the Bong Son Plain, An Lac Valley and the coastal highlands, coordinating closely with ARVN forces and teaming with armor whenever the situation was favorable.

PERSHING terminated on January 18, 1968, and at the end of the month the brigade moved to Quang Tri Province in southern I Corps, establishing firebases to support offensive operations in Base Area 101 and the Ba Long Valley. This was Operation JEB STUART, and from its headquarters at LZ Betty the brigade watched the drama of Tet 1968 unfurl.

As the NVA threat to Quang Tri grew during the first week of February, the brigade redeployed to that city to prevent its seizure during the country-wide enemy offensive that developed during those fateful days.

(Continued on P. 258)