8th ENGINEER BATTALION

COMMANDERS

LTC Robert J. Malley ..................................... July 1965—June 1966
LTC Charles G. Olentine .................................. June 1966—May 1967
LTC Edwin S. Townsley .................................. May 1967—May 1968
LTC Francis J. Walter Jr. ................................ May 1968—May 1969
LTC Andre G. Broumas .................................... May 1969—September 1969
LTC Scott B. Smith ........................................ September 1969—

The battalion was constituted on June 30, 1916, in the Regular Army as the 1st Battalion Mounted Engineers. On July 29, 1917, the battalion was redesignated as the 8th Engineer Battalion (Mounted).

The 8th Engineer Battalion participated in the World War II campaigns at New Guinea, Bismarck Archipelago, Leyte, and Luzon. During the Korean War it participated in the UN Defensive, the UN Offensive, the CCF Intervention, the First UN Counteroffensive, the CCF Spring Offensive, the UN Summer-Fall Offensive, the Second Korean Winter, and Korea Summer-Fall 1952.

The 8th Engineer Battalion has been presented with the Meritorious Unit Commendation, streamer embroidered ASIATIC-PACIFIC THEATER, the Philippine Presidential Unit Citation, (October 17, 1944 to July 4, 1945), the Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation, streamer embroidered WAEGWAN-TAE GU, the Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation, streamer embroidered KOREA, the Chrysson Arison Andrias (Bravery Gold Medal of Greece), streamer embroidered LOS NEGROS ISLAND.

In Vietnam, like other units of the division, the battalion earned the Presidential Unit Citation for the Pleiku Campaign. The Meritorious Unit Commendation, Second Oak Leaf Cluster for the period October 1965 to August 1966, and Third Oak Leaf Cluster for the period September 1, 1966, to August 31, 1967, also is proudly displayed by the battalion.

Imagine that you are a workman with a large construction firm which contracts the building of airstrips, roads and suburban housing developments, and whose schedules require the completion of these projects in a minimal amount of time.

This shield is red with a white border, the colors of the Corps of Engineers. The eight horseshoes indicate the numerical designation of the organization and its mounted service.

Add to this situation the fact that all your work is done in a tropical country where either a blazing sun bakes the back of your neck or the gush of monsoon rain buries your equipment in two feet of mud.

Having their work complicated by exactly these circumstances, the “Skybeavers,” the airmobile engineers of the 8th Engineer Battalion, operate when and where things need building or improvement.

The battalion’s expedient workmanship gives the division the required, bare necessities for tactical operation. The airstrips the engineers build keep supplies flowing by Air Force fixed wing and their roads move the sustenance for battle. In the case of the Cav’s engineers, the civilian housing project becomes a firebase, an air mobile division’s landing zone.

But perhaps the most important mission of the Cav’s “private construction company” is that of building LZs. These mobile tactical locations are used for varying lengths of time, ranging from only a few hours to several months, based on the tactical situation. This fact of life makes the mission of the Skybeavers a very important one, indeed.

Seemingly impregnable, Cav firebases serve a necessary function in that they give the infantry battalion the latitude needed for finding the enemy in his own habitat, the triple canopy jungle. While the infantrymen meet the opposition on the battlefield, engineers fight a different war, one against nature and her elements.

Any engineer's parched lips, tired muscles, tanned back and dirty fatigues tell the story of a Skybeaver engineer's
An 8th Engineer Battalion soldier gets into the thick of it in trying to free his road grader (above) from the persistent and clinging Vietnam mud.

way of life. Whether he is a surveyor, drives an earth mover or a backhoe, carries steel, constructs bunkers, or fills one of a thousand sandbags, the engineer is the Cav's I-beam, the backbone of the division's comfort and tactical mobility.

He is a FIRST TEAM engineer.

On August 16, 1965, the first unit of the 8th Engineer Battalion landed in Vietnam as the first squad of the first platoon of Charlie Company stepped off a C-130 at Nha Trang. By August 21 the remainder of the advance party had arrived and Major Thomas M. McClelland flew in from Saigon to assume overall command.

The engineers of Charlie Company had hardly pitched their tents in An Khe when they found themselves besieged by enough work for a battalion. They were charged with the mission of preparing An Khe for the rest of the division that was already on its way.

On September 12 the USNS Darby dropped anchor in Qui Nhon Harbor, completing a 28-day journey with the main body of the battalion. As the members of the unit greeted each other after the month's separation they found themselves facing the same problem Company C had—but on a larger scale. There was now enough work for an engineer group.

The men of the 8th Engineer Battalion are, of course, builders of firebases, roads and jungle airfields, but they are also soldiers. This engineer keeps his M-16 rifle loaded and handy as he takes sightings in the construction of another remote firebase.

It seemed as if everyone needed a road into their area, a rice paddy drained or an anthill knocked down. Faced with so much work, the battalion could only answer the most urgent requests for aid and, in order to answer these, frequently worked around the clock. The most pressing project was the leveling of the top of Hon Cong Mountain, a massive rock-tipped mountain just to the west of the basecamp, to be used as a signal complex.

In October units of the battalion participated in their first tactical operations. Company C was first as it supported the 3rd Brigade on Operation SHINY BAYONET. Bravo Company swung into action even before Charlie Company returned by supporting the 2nd Brigade in an operation in the Vinh Thanh “Happy Valley.” Both companies worked primarily on route maintenance.

These operations set the pattern for tactical employment of engineers in 1966. Normally, companies, reinforced by equipment and medics, were attached to the brigades. The platoons were further attached to infantry battalions, and two or three-man demolitions teams were attached to infantry companies. It was these demolition teams that were to see the most action and suffer the most casualties.

Beginning in late January the battalion launched a new phase in its combat engineer support of the division. In addition to what had become normal engineer support missions, the 8th Engineer Battalion initiated an extensive airfield construction program which saw seven new airfields constructed before the end of June. Two other airfields were lengthened to twice their previous size, and the extensive repair and modification of numerous other airfields was undertaken during this same six month period.

During Operation MASHER, which began on January 24, the battalion was given the mission of construction of an airfield at Position Dog, a few kilometers north of Bong Son. Alpha Company, with the second equipment platoon from Headquarters Company attached, moved overland from An Khe to Position
Dog. The men and equipment arrived on the site on January 28 and began work the same day. Their mission was completed on the 31st, after working around the clock for 70 hours. In what was to become characteristic of the men of the 8th, they did not stop work but continued on their own initiative for another day until the airstrip was capable of handling C-123 aircraft. This field was named English Airfield in honor of Specialist Five Carver J. English who was killed in the crash of a CH-54 “Flying Crane” on January 5.

On February 22, Headquarters Company began work on a C-130 airfield six kilometers north of Phu Cat. In addition to the required runway of 3,200 feet, which was completed in 120 hours, a parking apron for 10 aircraft and three kilometers of access and service roads were built. The entire project was completed on March 5. The airfield was named Hammond Airfield in honor of Sergeant First Class Russell E. Hammond who had been killed in action a few months before. The security for the work force was provided by Company B.

While a portion of the battalion’s resources were being used to construct these two airfields, the larger portion of the battalion’s effort was directed to support of the brigades in Operations Masher, White Wing, Eagle’s Claw, Blackhorse and Sitting Bull.

During Operation Lincoln, which lasted from March 25 to April 8, Company A had no sooner finished an airfield at Position Oasis when the battalion requested and obtained permission to construct a 3,500 foot C-130 airfield at the same location. Work began immediately. The field was constructed with bulldozers, tractor-scrapers, graders and self-propelled rubber-tired rollers.

In August the Skybeavers participated in Operation Paul Revere II, which witnessed the heaviest commitment of the battalion in any single operation to that date. After studying the division’s disposition and planned operations, Lieutenant Colonel Charles G. Olentine decided to also move the battalion headquarters to a forward area in order to better support the division effort and control engineer resources. This was the first time since the arrival of the 8th Engineer Battalion in Vietnam that the battalion headquarters operated outside of Camp Radcliff. All of Company B, Company C and Headquarters Company moved to Tuttle Airfield at Position Oasis. Since it was during the monsoon season, all of the battalion’s resources and skills were fully required during the month-long operation.

The most unusual mission in Operation Irving was conducted by Company C in support of the 3rd Brigade. On October 5 the third platoon assumed control of three ARVN light tactical raft half-pontoons with motors and used them to ferry confiscated rice to a secure area. The first platoon of Company C used four pontoons and one pneumatic assault boat, all with outboard motors, to patrol the rivers in its area on the 5th and 10th of October. The normal demolition missions of the company in Irving resulted in 212 military and 383 civilian bunkers being destroyed along with 18 caves and two tunnel systems.

Two other operations were in progress in the last five months of 1966 which were supported by the 8th Engineer Battalion. A task force from the 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry, was supported by the second platoon of Charlie Company in Operation Byrd near Phan Thiet in the southeast corner of the II Corps area. The “lonesome end” platoon left for Phan Thiet on the 1st of August and was still there on the last day of 1966.
Numerous landing zones had been cleared and several forward bases established by the platoon. Under the leadership of First Lieutenant James S. Rawlings, the second platoon earned the reputation of being the hardest working platoon in the task force.

The New Year 1967 found the entire battalion still in Binh Dinh Province participating in Operation THAYER II, but at the same time it marked the climax of the Skybeavers ability to assume their secondary mission as infantrymen. Hammond Army Airfield had survived the devastating effects of a severe monsoon season only because of the never-tiring efforts of the Skybeaver battalion. Charlie Company had a platoon in direct support at this time, and it nursed each new wound in the airfield promptly and professionally. Headquarters Company continued to maintain and rebuild the road network, which periodically washed out.

Operation THAYER II came to a close on the 12th of February and Operation PERSHING began shifting two brigades and division headquarters to the Bong Son area. Thus started the longest single operation in the history of the 1st Air Cavalry Division centered in the Bong Son Plain. With this new operation, Company A moved from LZ Pony to LZ English with the 1st Brigade. It immediately began clearing battalion-size firebases and destroying enemy bunkers and tunnel systems.

Lieutenant Colonel Edwin S. Townsley had hardly assumed command when the battalion received its first major mission—open the road from Gia Huu to Sa Huynh. The road to Sa Huynh is actually an eight kilometer section of Highway QL-1 extending northward from the boundary between Binh Dinh and Quang Ngai Provinces to the Task Force Oregon boundary. This section of Highway 1 and not been used for commercial traffic since 1962 when the Viet Cong destroyed nearly all the bridges, dug deep, wide trenches across the roadway and installed many barricades to limit its usage and extract tolls. In addition, each rainy season continued to carve into the roadway where the roadbed had been weakened.

This was the scene that confronted Lieutenant Hartford Bennerman of the first platoon of Company A on the 4th of June, after LTC Townsley directed that Company A open the road with equipment support from Headquarters Company. It was no easy task and one that had to be completed within four days. Within two days the work parties joined forces without any sign of enemy activity. It was hot, hard work with the temperatures well above 100 degrees throughout the operation. Approximately 2,500 cubic yards of fill were dumped or dozed alongside the bridges and 354 feet of culvert were emplaced to construct bypasses for the flow of future military and civilian traffic.

During August the division expanded its area of operation in a new phase of Operation PERSHING and this intensified the combat support requirements of all the Skybeaver companies. Emphasis was placed on the preparation and establishment of new landing zones and artillery firebases. Construction engineering tasks continued as the battalion improved lines of communication, began construction on a new airfield and progressed rapidly toward the completion of the new LZ English munitions storage area.

One of the major projects in August involved the construction of a 1,400 by 60 foot airstrip at LZ Pony by First Lieutenant Thomas Howard’s first equipment platoon.

During the first week of October nomadic Charlie Company, in support of the 3rd Brigade, again picked up its belongings in true airmobile fashion and moved to a place named Hill 63. When Company C departed LZ English, it also took along one platoon from Bravo Company and one heavy equipment platoon from Headquarters Company. Most of the engineer effort during the first few days of October was expended on preparing its own company area, constructing a brigade briefing room and improving the existing barrier. Operation WALLOWA began on October 4 and continued through the end of 1967 and the early part of 1968.

Early in the month of December the 1st Brigade established contact with an estimated two NVA battalions of the 22nd NVA Regiment near Tam Quan. Alpha Company provided direct support to the operation by sending the first and third platoons into the contact area. The two platoons supported the infantry by destroying bunkers, directing the clearing of LZs and filling trenches. The battle of Tam Quan was a real test of the Skybeavers ability to assume their secondary mission as infantrymen. In the first 40 hours of the contact, they advanced alongside or in front of the infantry killing 10 NVA and allowing the infantry to capture 10 weapons.

Again in the year 1968 the Skybeavers proved themselves a match for their motto: “No one else can do so much.”

In 1968 the 8th Engineer Battalion deployed to the II Corps Tactical Zone. Operations PERSHING, WALLOWA and BYRD were soon to be terminated and the extension of the runway at LZ Baldy was completed prior to the move north to I Corps. As the FIRST TEAM became the
The engineers get the job done. And if a ladder isn't handy, they improvise. Here two 8th Engineers secure A-frame joists in building a "hootch" for one of the more permanent Cav base areas.

U.S. Army's northernmost division, the 8th Engineer Battalion was among the first units to begin operations in the JEB STEWART AO. One battalion of the 1st Brigade, supported by First Lieutenant Gary V. Diers' third platoon of Company A, led the division into LZ El Paso, near Hue, on January 17. There they were joined two days later by the first platoon. Working with organic and borrowed heavy engineer equipment, maximum effort was expended to open the division's forward basecamp.

Company A devoted the first week of May to preparation for the final phase of Operation DELAWARE in the A Shau Valley. Beginning May 8 groups of five to six engineers accompanied the infantry units as far as LZ Stallion with a mission of area denial operations.

Still in the A Shau on June 5, the third platoon, Charlie Company, moved to LZ Mooney to begin construction of the new firebase. In four days the men completed a supply helipad, 12 gun emplacements, a tactical operations center, an aid station and an ammunition bunker.

Early in August Company B began preparations for the arrival of the 2nd Brigade by rebuilding LZ Nancy. Shortly after midnight on August 16 mortar and rocket rounds rained in on the landing zone, followed by a heavy ground attack along the south side of the perimeter. At several points the perimeter was breached and enemy sappers rushed onto the firebase. Due to a fine defense and the valorous acts of many of its men, Bravo Company repulsed the attack from its sector. The two hour battle took its toll, one Skybeaver was killed and six wounded. Nine valor awards were won by members of the company for their actions during the fight.

On October 27, 1968, the division was alerted to move to the III Corps Tactical Zone. Immediately all construction work ceased and effort was directed toward preparing for the move. Within 36 hours after notification, elements of C Company had closed on III Corps, constructing the first of 10 landing zones they were to build in the next 60 days. The completed move relocated Company A at Tay Ninh, Charlie Company at Quan Loi and Headquarters and Bravo Companies at Phouc Vinh. On March 12 Bravo Company moved to Lai Khe with the 2nd Brigade.

On April 1, 1969, one platoon of Bravo Company moved to Bien Hoa to aid in the construction of the division training center, which was completed on April 22. On April 17 a platoon from Bravo Company moved to Phouc Vinh to become the general support platoon for the division.

Each company in the 1st Cav has its commanding officer, executive officer and platoon leaders. But Company A, 8th Engineers, has something unique—a rice officer. When the Cavalrymen from the 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry, began discovering the white staple, First Lieutenant Stephen Dacey was assigned as the company's rice officer.

"Division headquarters had decided that each engineer company would handle the rice for its brigade," said Lieutenant George M. Walker, executive officer for the company. "We were to store the rice we found until we had enough to send to the Montagnard village near Song Be."

The discovery of more than 100 tons of rice on the 7th of February came as a surprise to many people, including the...
Moving the rice initially by truck and Chinook helicopter, the engineers had a crew waiting to load the staple on pallets and transport it to the Tay Ninh airstrip to be carried to Song Be on C-7A Caribou aircraft.

"The Viet Cong tried to stop us from moving the rice by blowing up the bridge between LZ Grant and Tay Ninh", said LT Dacey. "But we were able to finish the moving by Chinook."

The Skybeavers diligently worked to move the rice. Chinook after Chinook landed beside the dusty LZ and lifted the rice-laden slings to Tay Ninh.

After delivering 20 tons of rice to Song Be, the engineers turned the distribution of the remaining rice—some 80 tons—to the brigade civil affairs officer. He in turn distributed it to local villagers.

Throughout the period May to August the Skybeavers performed their missions of building and upgrading firebases and giving minesweep and demolition support to the infantry battalions.

At Bu Dop the Skybeavers fought and won a different kind of battle—one with monsoon season rain and mud—when they set to work in September resurfacing and expanding the vital Bu Dop airstrip. It was during a flight from Quan Loi to Bu Dop that the chopper carrying Lieutenant Colonel Andre Broumas and a Skybeaver planning staff was shot down, killing all aboard.

The platoon of heavy equipment operators from Headquarters Company had to cope with "rain that would make any engineer company throw up its hands and quit," said Command Sergeant Major Henry Salazar. "But we worked with what we had, and rain was something we had plenty of."

The other problem that hampered construction of the airstrip was enemy mortar fire. Not only would the engineers have to run for cover when the rounds crashed into the runway, but they also had to repair the craters that began to pockmark the strip.

"It took my men three days to fill some of these craters because most of the work had to be done by hand," said First Lieutenant Thurston McDaniels, officer in charge of the project. "We could have gotten the job done in a couple of weeks if it hadn't been for the bad weather and enemy mortar fire."

During the runway lengthening, rubber trees had to be blown down tree by tree. With 400 more feet of runway and clear view for take-offs and landings, pilots found Bu Dop a little easier to use for flights into the area.

Company A once again remained in support of the 1st Brigade at Tay Ninh through the end of October. LZ Ike was reopened on August 8 and LZ Becky was closed on August 11.

Alpha Company used September to upgrade the defensive posture of LZs Jamie and Grant, and to provide combat support for the infantry. One platoon was deployed to Camp Gorvad to take over base development projects from September 8 to October 17.

Bravo Company remained in support of the 2nd Brigade at Lai Khe until the middle of August when the airborne engineers moved with the brigade to FSB Buttons. From August to the end of October, Bravo Company opened firebases Caldwell, Mary, Don, and Alvarado, while FSB Judie was reopened.

Charlie Company spent the time from August to November based in Quan Loi in support of the 3rd Brigade. In August C Company closed LZs Vivian and Ellen and built FSB Eagle I.

FSB Eagle I was closed in September and firebases Jerri and Ann were built. Vivian was reopened on the 1st of October and Ellen was reopened later in the month.

Other construction in support of the brigade included the upgrading of the Quan Loi greenline and the building of the Special Forces Camp at Bu Dop.

So the year went, and once again in 1969, as in all the years before, the 8th Engineer Battalion Skybeavers proved that "No One Else Can Do So Much."
Orange and white are the traditional colors used for the Signal Corps. The mountains are symbolic of the mountainous areas of the Pacific in which the unit provided communications for the 1st Cavalry Division during World War II. They also represent the invasions of Bismarck Archipelago and Leyte. The arms grasping the lightning flashes allude to the mission of the unit enabling information and orders to be sent and received. The seven lightning flashes commemorate the seven decorations awarded the unit for services in World War II and Korea. The temple refers to action in Korea during the Korean War.

Signalmen work midway up the tall communications tower at the division headquarters in Phuoc Vinh, Camp Gorvad. The commanding general and his staff must be assured of instant and clear radio contact with the division elements spread over 4,000 square miles.

LTC Tom M. Nicholson ............................................ July 1965—January 1966
LTC Paul N. Simon .................................................. January 1966—August 1966
LTC Walter J. Bodman, Jr. ......................................... August 1966—January 1967
LTC Paul Gentry .................................................... July 1967—June 1968
LTC Billy J. Thrasher ............................................... June 1968—June 1969
LTC James R. Cook ................................................ June 1969—October 1969
LTC Norman E. Archibald ......................................... October 1969—
The 13th Signal Battalion was formed on June 7, 1917, as the 7th Field Signal Battalion.

From 1921 to the time the unit went into combat in World War II, signal equipment and procedures were drastically changed. The old pack radios and telegraph fell by the wayside. Modern equipment came into universal use, and the flags and torch were relegated to nothing more than collar insignia.

When the 1st Cavalry Division moved into the battle areas of the Southwest Pacific, the 13th Signal moved right with it. Lorengau and Mamote in the Admiralty Islands were among the first campaigns in which the 13th Signal participated. From there the unit moved right with the division until the Japanese surrendered. Actions in the Pacific earned it three Meritorious Unit Streamers.

The unit saw combat again in 1950 when the 1st Cavalry moved into Korea at the outbreak of hostilities. For its commendable action, it received a Meritorious Unit Commendation.

The 13th Signal was relieved from the scene of fighting and returned to Hokkaido with other units of the division. It returned to Korea in 1957, when the 24th Division was inactivated and redesignated the 1st Cavalry Division.

In Vietnam the battalion received the Presidential Unit Citation for the Pleiku Campaign.

The 13th Signal Battalion has provided telephone, radio, teletype and cryptographic services to an airmobile combat division spread over an area of operations approximately the size of Connecticut. They did all of this with the smallest signal battalion in the Army, and with the least and lightest equipment. The equipment had been cut down, transistorized and compacted to fit into a one-quarter ton trailer or to be slung under a Chinook.

By necessity the number of men in the battalion had been drastically reduced. They had to be ready to move into a different area at a moment's notice; to wherever the FIRST TEAM happened to be fighting. "Voice of Command" is the slogan of the battalion. These professional communicators lived this sobriquet from the beginning.

The 13th Signal Battalion arrived in Qui Nhon, Republic of Vietnam, in mid-September 1965 and moved its personnel, vehicles and equipment overland on Route 19 west to the division basecamp at An Khe. They spent the remainder of the year helping to develop the basecamp and meeting the division’s tactical communications requirements. They also established the Hon Cong Mountain signal facility which became the communications hub of the northern half of the republic.

The battalion teamed up with the
information office to provide AFRS radio programming to Skytroopers at Camp Radcliff. Since the AM signal from the Qui Nhon booster station could not be heard in the An Khe Valley, a transmitter and tower were obtained from AFRS in Saigon. The battalion loaned Sergeant Keith A. Shiley to the information office as technical advisor. SGT Shiley, using surplus materials, built a console, wired in four tape decks on loan, and, in early December, AFRS-An Khe, broadcasting at 1300 kilocycles, signed on the air. The basic network signal was brought in by a VHF link from Qui Nhon. Later, SGT Shiley built an FM transmitter and was experimenting with a stereo rig when he departed the battalion on rotation.

The battalion’s basic signal systems were given their first full scale combat test in the Plei Me Campaign that took place in the Ia Orang Valley in October and November of 1965. The advance communications center was located at the division forward command post at Pleiku which, in turn, was in a personnel pod carried by a Flying Crane. All communications equipment and personnel at the forward command post were provided by the signal battalion. This center was operational 24 hours per day for the duration of the entire operation.

Particularly outstanding and very effective was the airborne relay. This flying communications van was credited with saving the lives of many who would otherwise have been unable to communicate their needs or distress. The unit consisted of a fixed wing aircraft equipped with two powerful FM radios. The craft would fly an orbit, 10,000 feet above the widely dispersed combat units to pick up and retransmit messages among units which would not otherwise be able to communicate.

During the early part of 1965 a VHF teletype circuit was instituted between the division forward and the division base command post. The installation vastly improved security and reliability of command and control.

The communication demands of Operation PAUL PEVERE II precipitated the creation of a rear operations
support platoon. The element was formed from all parts of the signal battalion in order to support the division forward command post.

Another systems innovation was initiated in the summer of 1966. The plan was to standardize the prewiring of the forward switchboard and to produce a telephone directory prior to an operation, thus eliminating much of the confusion previously associated with a move of the division forward command post.

An air courier was required to meet the needs of Operation THAYER. A UH-1 helicopter was maintained with a dependable schedule throughout the autumnal campaign. Operation PAUL REVERE IV ran concurrently with Operation THAYER II. In order to meet the needs of the dual situation several distinct duplicate nets had to be created.

As an example of how widely dispersed the 13th was during 1967, at one time it was providing communications teams at Bong Son, An Khe, Kontum, LZ Uplift, LZ English, Duc Pho, LZ Sandra, Qui Nhon, Bagi, Saigon and Phan Tiet. The teams also operated at times during 1967 from Pleiku, Plateau Gi, Tuy Hoa and Chu Lai.

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The insignia of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), and of all non-color bearing units in the division, is identical to the division patch, with the exception of two gold stars on the black band.

A division at war is a remarkable thing—flexible, vital, and powerful. The response to changes of conditions in Vietnam required extraordinary discipline and initiative from Headquarters and Headquarters Company (HHC), the division nerve center.

The history of HHC is a microcosm of the story of the entire division. The preoccupations of the division as a whole were those of HHC.

HHC was, by its definition, a hodgepodge of differing elements. It was home for legions of clerks, lexicographers, supply personnel, intelligence and personnel specialists. It contained the division command structure, including the commanding general and his staff, aide, and direct subordinates.

The manpower strength of HHC was greater than a maneuver battalion. Its disparate membership, the clerks, cooks, draftsmen, security platoon members, RTOs, supply sergeants, all linked into a vast network of command, coordination, and creativity reaching out to firebases and rear areas, pilots and infantrymen.

The division's analogy to a brain, HHC had to fulfill its precise and exacting function under the adverse conditions faced by an airmobile division on the move in Vietnam.

HHC had a bearing on nearly everything affecting the Cavalryman. Planning concerning pay; distribution of R&Rs; allotments; granting of leave; delivery of food, ammunition, and construction materials; determination of when a new firebase was to be built; selection of battlefield tactics; gathering, analysis, and storage of intelligence; supervision of pacification programs; the leadership of the whole division, all came through HHC.

And below the top echelon, as always, were the junior officers and enlisted men toiling at the thankless and crucial tasks involved in organizing and maintaining the division's command structure.

Maps had to be up to date, someone had to keep the files and records and print up the reports working under pressure for deadlines and accuracy far more exacting than in the most hectic metropolitan newspapers.

People had to be on the phones and radios 24 hours a day in the DTOC.

The giant Cav patch leaves no question as to who occupies the summit of Hon Cong Mountain, the site of a heavy VC mortar and ground attack on February 19, 1966.
which at times appeared to be nothing more than a tangle of organized chaos buried in tents and bunkers.

The RTO in the DTOC worked 12 hours a day. That meant several men doing nothing but waiting on radios, listening for reports from the brigades and units in the field, prepared to ensure the fastest distillation and proper disposition of all information coming in.

Only in this way would the general staff know what was happening, when it was happening. Everything had to be recorded, distributed and filed.

The success of the airmobility concept in Vietnam can be largely credited to the creation of a command system able to respond to its special demands. HHC was a vital and integral part of that command system.
In July 1965 the 545th Military Police (MP) Company was alerted, reorganized and packed to move into combat. When the main body of the company arrived in Vietnam it joined the advance party at An Khe and began to expedite the flow of traffic. By mid-October an MP desk with traffic and criminal investigation division (CID) sections was established in the division base area. A second MP desk was operated in the village of An Khe where a conex container had to be modified to serve as a “drunk tank.” A vice squad worked in An Khe while patrols and gate guards controlled and expedited the flow of traffic in the division base area as command post (CP) security was provided for the operations area.

The MPs were operating roadblocks by the end of 1965 with the assistance of the Vietnamese National Police.

The 545th MP Company supported Operations MASCHER/WHITE WING beginning January 25, 1966. They provided guards for captured materials and weapons and operated an inclosure for detaining VC suspects.

The MPs aided military intelligence teams whenever they became involved in sweeps of populated areas—guarding, searching, detaining, protecting and detecting. MPs regularly accompanied civil affairs personnel to secure them while they operated in the division’s tactical area of operations.

It was also necessary to use patrols and checkpoints to control the flow of refugees.

In late March, during Operations LINCOLN and MOSBY, the first platoon provided convoy escorts from An Khe to the 1st Brigade’s forward CP. Additionally, the company provided guards for the MACV compound in Pleiku.

In October 1966 forward collection
points were set up in the areas where brigades were operating. All military-age males and enemy detainees were sent by the maneuver battalions to the collection point supporting its brigade. There confirmed enemies were interrogated for immediate tactical information then evacuated through regular prisoner of war channels. Other detainees were held at forward collection points for questioning by military intelligence, the national police or hamlet cadre in order to classify them as friend or foe. Innocent civilians were released and allowed to return to their homes. Those who turned out to be refugees were evacuated to a central collection point where they were helped to resettle in a refugee center. This screening during Operation IRVING virtually destroyed the Viet Cong infrastructure, placing the district under government control for the first time in several years.

The MPs launched into operations with the Police Field Force (NPFF) in June 1967. These were combined operations, mainly with the Vietnamese 222nd Battalion, Combat National Police. The plan was to cordon a village during the night, followed by a combined sweep through the village at dawn. The Vietnamese police searched houses and questioned people as they moved through. They often returned repeatedly to the same hamlets.

Ever try to outrun a grenade? On another sweep of a hamlet on the Bong Son Plain in August 1967, an MP spotted a hole ahead of him, just as an arm reached out and tossed a hand grenade. The MP turned and ran out of range. Another frag followed and he ran still further. Finally, when the VC poked his head up to lob a third one, one of the other MPs shot him, leaving the specialist still running, but unhurt.

Later, the team flushed out several Viet Cong and a firefight broke out. Specialist Four Joe Ferraro, a former schoolteacher from Boston, was hit in the chest and his weapon was knocked away from him as he fell. He lay still as the fight raged on around him. Suddenly, one of the enemy soldiers jumped up and ran, trying to escape into the nearby jungle. He was charging right past Ferraro when the wounded MP leaped to his feet with a brick in his hand and killed the startled VC with a single blow before the enemy could raise his rifle.

When the division moved north to I Corps in 1968 the MPs had to surmount the problems of having to secure multiple and constantly mobile tactical operations centers. They continued to process prisoners and detainees even though they were always on the move. When they finally settled down for the summer of 1968 at Camp Evans, the company built a POW collection camp. The "cage" became a model for the handling of hostiles throughout Vietnam. An International Red Cross inspection team gave the facility a maximum rating for complying with the highest standards of treatment.

After the 1st Cavalry Division moved south to III Corps, the MPs continued their missions of TOC security and convoy control. They also began com-

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Since its arrival in Vietnam, the 1st Cavalry Division has relied exclusively on the men of Division Chemical, a special staff section which works in cooperation with the G-3 (plans and operations), for the use of chemical material in all of its aspects.

In turn, the 26th Chemical Detachment aids Division Chemical in accomplishing its mission and acts as a ready reserve for the chemical platoon.

The 184th Direct Support Platoon is under the operational control of Division Chemical; its operations section being primarily responsible for all "flame" operations within the division.

It is this operations section which constructs, installs and maintains all the fougasse barrels around 1st Cav basecamps and fire support bases. The fougasse charges have proven invaluable in base defense, especially when used against attacking enemy, who have a particular dislike for the simple weapon.

The platoon also installs "Husch Flares," a type of flame field expedient used in base perimeter defense, illuminating an area for up to six hours.

The direct support maintenance-section of the platoon inspects all chemical equipment in the division and performs maintenance when necessary.

Items of primary maintenance concern for the platoon are protective masks and flamethrowers. While the enemy has not frequently used gas agents in combat, the possibility of its use requires that division personnel have access to functional protective masks.

One of the platoon's specialties is operation and maintenance of the airborne personnel detector. Better known as the "people sniffer," the sensitive instrument is operated from a low flying helicopter and has the ability to detect enemy activity or lack of it in the areas over flown.

All sections of the 1st Cav's chemical complex are consistently researching methods of improving chemical support. They are constantly involved in testing new developments and have contributed numerous innovations.

One such innovation is the BURB, an example of the platoon's chemical ingenuity that has come to be expected. In early 1969 Master Sergeant Jack Watts developed the Bunker Use Restriction Bomb (BURB), a device made from discarded ammunition cannisters which is detonated inside an enemy bunker, contaminating its interior with persistent CS.


The 191st Military Intelligence Company (MIC) has the mission to perform all specialized intelligence and counterintelligence functions requiring the employment of special skills or foreign languages.

Consisting of a company headquarters and four functionally organized operations sections—Order of Battle (OB), Interrogation of Prisoners of War (IPW), Imagery Interpretation (II), and Counter-Intelligence (CI)—the company provides tactical commanders at all levels with timely intelligence to meet the changing situations created by the 1st Cav’s mobility.

The unit was first constituted in September 1950 and participated with the Cav through six campaigns in the Korean War.

The detachment went to the Republic of Vietnam in September 1965 and there provided intelligence for the division leading up to and throughout the Pleiku Campaign, October 23 to November 26, 1965.

Intelligence networks require time to develop. That network and the 191st’s surveillance of enemy activity continued to expand the wealth of intelligence throughout 1966.

Early in 1968, when the Skytroopers moved to the Northern I Corps, the 191st had its work cut out—all commanders had to be familiarized with the new situation. Within two days after the division headquarters made the move a comprehensive Order of Battle book of some 100 pages and a distribution of more than 300 copies was made. This was the first Order of Battle handbook published on the Northern I Corps area for use by U.S. forces.

One of the intelligence specialists’ primary sources of information was the Imagery Interpretation section. This section interpreted photos and data from missions flown by reconnaissance aircraft. The imagery interpreters identified numerous enemy targets from aerial photographs. The enemy bunkers and trenches detected were reported to the combat arms for “appropriate action.” The analysts also have the capability to interpret infrared and side-looking airborne radar.

During 1969 the interrogation section supported every major operation undertaken by the 1st Cavalry Division and in July 1969 the debriefing of a Hoi Chanh furnished the division with information on an enemy plan to attack the Quan Loi basecamp. A complete interrogation provided the 1st Cav with the routes of attack, enemy units involved, time of the attack and routes of withdrawal.

The information proved to be reliable and the Skytroopers took advantage of the forewarning to crush the attack.

While the interrogation teams were questioning hundreds of prisoners, Hoi Chanhs, and civilians each month in their quest for information, the Counter-Intelligence (CI) section was out to prevent subversion of the FIRST TEAM by the enemy.

The CI section performed security inspections, validated security clearances and established an internal net for early warning collection.

In November 1969, members of the 2nd ARVN military intelligence were assigned duties with the special operations branch of the CI section, and there received on-the-job training in intelligence activities.