and chattered tracers toward the men. With one final grenade, Sprayberry crawled forward once more to the enemy machinegun bunker. He pulled the pin, let the lever fly and slammed the frag home. The explosion ripped through the bunker, killing all inside.

As dawn began to streak the sky, Sprayberry was moving the last wounded to friendly lines. Behind him in the barely visible outline of daybreak lay 12 enemy dead, two blasted machineguns and a string of quiet bunkers.

On October 9, 1969, James Sprayberry, by then a captain, stood before President Richard Nixon to receive the Medal of Honor for his actions on that dark night, for his relentless actions as a “lieutenant grenadier.”

In the A Shau Valley the Skytroopers taught the enemy a hard lesson—that he had no area within the Republic of Vietnam that he could consider to be a secure base.

They also established LZ Jack. On May 6 the LZ endured an intense enemy mortar and rocket attack. Sergeant Michael A. Haviland of C Company managed to crawl out of his collapsed bunker and spied two injured Skytroopers trapped by debris in a nearby trench.

“I heard them calling for help; so I was determined to get them out,” recalled SGT Haviland.

In spite of the enemy barrage the sergeant crawled to his comrades, dug them out and carried them to safety, an action for which he was later awarded the Silver Star.

The battalion moved with the rest of the division at the beginning of November to close out 1968 in northern III Corps. Shortly after New Year’s, a helicopter pilot spotted what seemed to be an ammo box on top of a bunker, 23 kilometers southeast of An Loc. Charlie Company went to investigate.

“We tried to move in C Company but for the first three days we did not get in. Even though the enemy was well entrenched in his bunkers, with the help of aerial rocket artillery, Air Force strikes and artillery we were able to dislodge him and move in,” the battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel John F. McGraw, recalled. It was 11 a.m. on January 21 when they penetrated what proved to be one of the most significant caches captured in the campaign—more than 18 tons of ammunition.

Combat activity up through April was scattered. Elements of the battalion pulled off a perfect night ambush April 14 about 20 kilometers southwest of An Loc. Four unsuspecting enemy soldiers wandered down a trail and paid heavily for their lack of security. Claymores and grenades halted their progress. All four enemy died without returning a single shot.

Later in the month on the 25th, a 5th Bn, 7th Cav, platoon was engaged by well entrenched enemy squad early in the evening. The platoon answered the heavy fire with its own automatic weapons, supported by tube artillery, ARA and tactical air strikes. Eight NVA were killed. Operating four kilometers away from the contact area the next morning, the same element spotted one enemy soldier moving down a trail and eliminated him. He was carrying two AK-47s.

Six men from Echo Company were
occupying a listening post the evening of May 5. Their vigil had just begun when they heard a sizable force moving in their direction. They called in a mortar barrage, blew their claymores and quickly returned to the landing zone.

The attack really began at 3:30 a.m. More than 200 mortar rounds fell on the base within 15 minutes. The barrage was followed by a ground attack but "only about 40 NVA hit the wire," said Captain Elvin Takata, commander of Alpha Company. The firebase was scheduled to be removed the next day. The enemy had lost at least eight of their number trying to dislodge the installation which was vacated by the following evening.

Searching in heavy jungle, Company A found six and a half tons of rice stored in a large bunker 34 miles north of Phuoc Vinh on August 2. The Garry Owen troopers also depleted Charlie's "motor pool" when they uncovered 12 bicycles in another bunker nearby. Many of the 112 bunkers in the complex were fortified with as much as four feet of overhead cover. Also captured that day by Alpha Company were 14 mines, 97 rifles, and a .51 caliber machinegun.

While on an operation in the dense undergrowth of Phuoc Binh District later in the month, Delta Company dug in when a large enemy force challenged with RPG rounds and small arms fire shortly after noon, just five miles southeast of Song Be.

Within minutes, the company's firepower turned from ground based tube artillery to airmobile as Cobras screamed down on the camouflaged positions.

After more than an hour of intense fighting, the enemy broke contact and scattered into the area to regroup for a second attack on Delta Company positions. Twenty-five minutes of quiet were broken when RPG rounds exploded near the Skytrooper position, signaling the second NVA attack in little more than an hour. It took only 20 minutes for the Garry Owen troopers to silence the enemy fire this time, with the aid of artillery support.

When the smoke had cleared, a company sweep of the battle site accounted for 19 NVA dead left behind by the fleeing, battered enemy forces. Also captured were 31 82 mm mortar rounds.

Cavalrymen surprised and killed seven NVA in a bunker complex on September 15, five miles southeast of Song Be. Bravo Company engaged the enemy and then called in helicopter gunships during the 45 minute battle ending shortly before noon.

The company continued to sweep the immediate area and two days later a recon patrol discovered a bunker cache.

One dead NVA was found along with 112 82 mm mortar rounds, 12 60 mm mortar rounds and one AK-47 rifle.

Alpha Company, working several miles away, killed six catching them in the open. It also discovered a bunker complex with a mortar pit and the ammunition cache.

Alpha Company was awakened on October 1 by incoming 60 mm mortar rounds pounding its night defensive position. The enemy broke off after they had pumped more than 30 rounds into the company's position. The Skytroopers fought back with artillery and used gunship support. When the smoke cleared 10 enemy bodies were found.

October 20 brought with it more mortars for Alpha Company. The Garry Owens were waiting for a lift on a pickup some 13 miles northeast of Song Be when the rounds started falling. The infantrymen returned fire and called artillery, gunships and tactical air support. The Skytroopers' response left 14 enemy dead.

No one in the battalion was left out of the action. When sappers breached the wire at FSB Buttons they were met at the berm by the battalion's clerks. It was the first firefight for the majority of the men but the enemy was quickly driven back, leaving 63 bodies behind.

At the end of the year the battalion was back at Phuoc Vinh patrolling the rocket and mortar belt around division headquarters.
the Air Force were in constant action. Air strikes and 2.75 inch rockets filled the night with a “beautiful sound” in the words of one Skytrooper, and C-119 “Shadow” ships illuminated the contact area with their flares.

It was 6:15 a.m. before the enemy realized he had failed and broke contact. Fifty-three NVA were left behind inside the perimeter and as Delta Company swept around the landing zone that day, it found another 22 enemy bodies.

This was just one of several times that LZ Jamie was the target of NVA attempts to reopen their supply routes. Later that summer Delta Company was on base defense on LZ Jamie. It had been a typical day on a landing zone, the usual patrols, searching out the enemy during the day, men checking the concertina wire on the perimeter, 105 mm howitzers occasionally booming support to nearby companies in the field.

While working around Jamie the battalion uncovered many North Vietnamese bunker complexes, food and weapons caches, and hospital complexes.

During a typical search operation in late July the battalion discovered one of these complexes. Searching a small cluster of fortifications 24 miles northeast of Tay Ninh, the Skytroopers of Bravo and Charlie Companies, 2nd Bn, 7th Cav, netted a lucrative assortment of enemy equipment, which included large quantities of drugs and first aid kits, rice, antitank mines, and a sewing machine.

The haul was the result of careful planning and experience gained during FIRST TEAM operations in the same area in April and May.

“The last time we went in there,” said the battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Godwin Ordway, “we were accompanied by elements of the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment. Not only did we kill a large number of enemy, but we uncovered one bunker complex after another. The resistance we met there was quite stiff.”

Tactics were changed significantly this time. Rather than pushing from north to south as they did in April, an “instant landing zone” was created by dropping a 10,000 pound bomb. Within hours of the “daisy cutter,” elements of both companies air assaulted into the area.

The hospital complex was discovered soon after the assault. “We didn’t see the bunkers until we were practically on top of them,” said Specialist Four Ed Ranking, a rifleman with Company B.

And so went 1969. A year spent denying the North Vietnamese their critical infiltration routes. A year marked by hard fighting and quiet heroics by the men from the Garry Owen battalion.
open; McWethy moved to help and was wounded a third time before he reached the injured man. As he began administering artificial respiration he was struck and killed by still another enemy round.

Meanwhile, SP4 Harvey was firing as fast as he could in an effort to subdue the heavy enemy fire. The enemy machinegun seemed to concentrate on him and bullets were bouncing all around his position. One round hit and armed a grenade attached to his belt. He tried to pull it loose but he couldn’t get the grenade off. Realizing the danger to his comrades if he remained he jumped up and charged toward the enemy machinegun position. Before he reached the enemy, the grenade on his belt exploded, killing him and stunning the enemy machinegun crew. His two wounded comrades took advantage of the lull in firing to scramble to safety.

Harvey and McWethy were each awarded the Medal of Honor.

When Charlie Company troops jumped from their choppers March 18, 1968, they were right in the middle of Highway I. They had flown from LZ Cindy to search the village of Thon La Vang just west of the highway.

Staff Sergeant Elray T. Ellender, the lead platoon’s leader, recalled that his men started receiving fire from the village as the first men penetrated the outskirts. “The village was still, except for an occasional enemy round,” Ellender said. “The NVA had chased the villagers out earlier.”

After several fierce duels, the Cavalrymen pulled back to the railroad tracks which separate the village from the highway. They crouched behind the embankment as helicopters poured rockets into the Communist positions. The soldiers then went back into the village and encountered sporadic contact. Darkness forced them to withdraw to a safer position, but heavy artillery blasted the fortified emplacements during the night.

The next morning the company moved in and recovered 45 enemy bodies and 10 weapons.

The 1st Bn, 5th Cav, conducted Operation COMANCHE FALLS southwest of Base Area 101 from September 11 to October 2. It succeeded in denying the area to the enemy and disrupted his lines of supply. In addition to destroying several large basecamp installations (676 bunkers), the battalion killed 270 NVA soldiers and captured hundreds of weapons.

In what was the fastest and largest move ever in the Vietnam conflict, the battalion was ordered to move from northern I Corps to the III Corps Tactical Zone northwest of Saigon near the Cambodian border. As the end of 1968 approached the Black Knights were conducting operations southwest of Tay Ninh.

Members of the enemy’s bicycle set literally lost their wheels after the new year when elements of the battalion came across their hideaway 12 miles southeast of Quan Loi. Companies B and E were searching through the area when they discovered the enemy complex, containing enough supplies and parts to construct some 40 bicycles—and a motor scooter.

“We were told there was probably a complex in the area, so we were just looking around,” related Specialist Four Nathaniel Flowers, a fire team
leader with Company B. “Then there was this scooter leaning against a tree right out in the middle of nowhere.”

“When we first saw it the reaction was ‘Man, can you believe this?’ One guy even tried to crank it up, but then we saw the claymores.”

In anticipation of discovery, the enemy had placed claymore mines around the area. Everyone hit the ground, thinking it an ambush. But further investigation showed that they were not set to go off. Warm campfire ashes and dirty dishes indicated that the enemy had retreated in haste.

The complex, dubbed the “Motor Pool” by the Cavalrymen, contained 600 pounds of rice and 100 five-gallon cans of meat. In addition, numerous bicycle trails were found leading into and out of the complex.

Later in January the reconnaissance squad of Echo Company was sent to observe traffic along a highway 10 miles southeast of Quan Loi, following reports that the enemy had been waylaying Vietnamese travelers on the road. After not finding anything suspicious, the Cavalrymen moved further along the road to a new location to continue their mission.

“We had to set up and were just finishing the evening chow when we heard a noise like a chicken,” reported Private First Class Gordon C. Swisher, a rifleman with the squad. “We flattened out on the ground, and then saw what was causing all the racket.”

Up a nearby trail came a Viet Cong kicking a chicken along ahead of him, evidently to spring any booby traps that might be there. Following the pointman came several more enemy soldiers, each beating the bushes beside the trail for added security. The main element of the force then appeared, 140 in all, heavily armed with machineguns, B-40 rockets and small arms.

Waiting for a few minutes after the last enemy passed, the Cavalrymen called in artillery and air strikes on the unsuspecting enemy.

“That squawking chicken saved us,” PFC Swisher said. “For a while I was wondering if we were going to make it, though, especially when they started beating the bushes. I was certain they would spot one of us.”

February 2, saw one Skytrooper take on “Charlie” in a fast shooting contest. The rifleman, Private First Class Samuel Estep, was the pointman on a reconnaissance patrol which had been sent ahead to scout the trail prior to his platoon’s departure from its ambush site near Chi Linh.

He had been told to be especially watchful since another friendly element had spotted enemy troops on the trail a few minutes earlier, and had radiated the information to Estep’s platoon leader.

The patrol had not gone 20 meters when Estep rounded a corner of the trail and found himself face-to-face with the pointman of an enemy reconnaissance patrol.

It was then that the “quick kill” instruction—in which trainees learned to fire a rifle from the hip, without taking aim—came to PFC Estep’s aid.

“It happened pretty fast,” he recalled. “He ducked and I fired. The other two took off down the trail, but not before the platoon leader downed a second one. It was over almost as soon as it started.”

Throughout the spring and into summer the battalion encountered almost daily light contact and caches of enemy food and arms were found on a weekly basis. On June 14 Alpha Company uncovered 71 Soviet carbines, 10 mortar tubes, and six heavy machinegun barrels northwest of Lai Khe, while just down the road E Company troops were springing an ambush. They killed nine of the 15 enemy who crossed their path.

When Major General E. B. Roberts landed at LZ Lori on June 30 he reported that he and Command Sergeant Major Lawrence E. Kennedy had spotted some enemy during their flight. Observation helicopters killed one enemy and captured another when they went to check out the sighting. Charlie Company, 1st Bn, 5th Cav, diverted to make a sweep of the

A 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry, Skytrooper steadies himself by grabbing a stalk of bamboo while fighting his way (physically) through thick growth and “wait-a-minute” vines in the jungle north of Song Be.
area. They spotted six individuals who surrendered without a fight.

"Getting seven men to surrender without a firefight is very unusual," commented Lieutenant Colonel John Gibney, division G-3. "I can't recall the last time that such a thing happened in this division."

The battalion was patrolling the rocket and mortar belt around Camp Gorvad, doing its turn as "palace guard," when the big NVA offensive in Binh Long Province was unleashed on August 12.

The companies of the battalion were extracted from field locations around division headquarters, and air moved to Quan Loi. From there, the battalion was combat assaulted into blocking positions west of the An Loc-Quan Loi area to trap NVA elements fleeing back to their Cambodian sanctuary.

From August through September, the battalion combed the jungles of northwestern Binh Long Province, working its way northward toward the Bu Dop-Bo Duc area.

At FSB Vivian the battalion joined the 3rd Brigade’s efforts at choking infiltration on the Serges Jungle Highway.

On October 5, Bravo Company and a recon element from Echo made a combat assault 40 kilometers north of Quan Loi. They were prepared to sweep the area of thick bamboo and double canopy jungle when the first platoon of Bravo aborted an enemy ambush.

"Our point element spotted the enemy ambush before anyone got into the killing zone," said Specialist Four Dean Sharp.

The contact then developed into a full scale firefight with the Skytroopers’ firepower forcing an enemy company to retreat into the thick jungle, dragging dead and wounded with them.

In mid-November the enemy again threatened Bu Duc and Bu Dop and Charlie Company combat assaulted into FSB Jerri to re-open the firebase and provide security for a corps artillery unit flown in to give needed fire support to the area.

Meanwhile, the mission of interdicting enemy infiltration continued unabated around FSB Vivian and when 1969 came to a close, companies of the Black Knight battalion were still giving the NVA fits on the Serges Highway.

Members of the 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry’s “quick reaction force,” the Blues, blow 40 claymore mines and throw fragmentation grenades during an ambush training exercise near Phuoc Vinh in III Corps.
11th Aviation

(Continued From P. 154)

tisible for assigned support aircraft to an operation, be it a combat assault mission, logistical resupply, or simply supplying a command and control helicopter.

Also under control of the 11th Aviation Group are the Path Finders—a unique combination of soldier and air traffic controller, a breed of men known as “Blackhats.”

As their motto declares, the Blackhats are “first in and last out” on 1st Cav firebases. They must be on the first lift of a combat assault to open a new firebase in order to give radio flight instructions to the more than 200 aircraft that will flood the skies over a new firebase in its first 48 hours of life.

A Blackhat controller is easily identified. Besides the obvious black baseball cap that he wears in steel pot territory, the Blackhat has mannerisms that distinguish him from others in the field.

Most of the time he is standing, often on a water can, bunker or anything that will offer a better view. He will have a radio-telephone pressed to his ear and is constantly watching the sky for birds—big, noisy, metal birds.

On hot and cool LZs alike, their job is the same. They give navigational assistance to pilots approaching the LZ—wind direction, weather conditions, terrain features—and control the flight paths of aircraft in a crowded sky.

Admittedly, 200 aircraft in 48 hours does not equate the average LZ to O’Hare Field, but it is certainly enough traffic to be dangerous unless someone on the ground with an overall view knows what he’s doing. And he must have absolute authority, despite the difference between his enlisted rank and the officer pilots he guides.

One afternoon over a Cav LZ a helicopter chose to ignore the Blackhat controller’s approach directions. The Blackhat, watching the errant helicopter, got on the radio and chewed the pilot out, royally. The pilot recalled that when he landed the Blackhat was “embarrassed as hell when he found out I was a general, but I’ll tell you one thing, he was right, and he stuck by his guns in the matter. Next time I did it his way.”

228th AHB

(Continued From P. 149)

won another award. Brigadier General Frank Meszar, assistant division commander, presented LTC Bush with yet another safety award, honoring 22,500 accident-free flying hours totaled in a nine-month period. It was an all-time record of flying safety for the Ist Air Cavalry Division.

With 1969 coming to a close, the 228th Assault Support Helicopter Battalion was sending approximately 18 Chinooks in the air daily, flying from 110 to 120 sorties. Its mission in the division was air support—the backbone of airmobility.

Flight safety awards and records of hours flown and tonnage moved are all solid tributes to the men who fly, crew and maintain the Chinooks, but, sadly, these figures and testimonies do not measure sweat, fatigue and sheer bravery. The days for Chinook crews were long, long even by military flight standards. Commercial airline pilots and crews are not permitted to average more than 85 hours per month. Pilots and crews of the 228th regularly flew up to 140 hours per month.

It had never been done before, in war or peace. Not even the pilots who “flew the hump” in China-Burma during World War II, or the veteran pilots of the Berlin airlift worked under such demands on a day-to-day basis. One of the 228th’s pilots who could rightly make the comparison between the rigors of Chinook flying and combat flight in other years was Warrant Officer Ben R. Games of Union, Michigan, a veteran from the flight decks of World War II B-25 and B-29 bombers who re-entered military service at a ripe age to volunteer for a year of flight duty in Vietnam. Games said of the Chinook missions he flew: “It’s real flying, there’s no question about it. It’s constant flying, no auto pilot or anything, just plain honest stick time. I’ve never flown so much before in my life, even in World War II.”

A flying day for Chinook pilots and crews began in the dark early hours when the crew arrived on the flight line to begin the pre-flight maintenance check. After an hour of crawling over the Chinook, the crew chief greets his pilots. “I’ll fly okay,” he reports.

At 7 a.m. they lift off, starting the actual flying day that will usually average out to about 10 in-flight hours, although some 12 hours will pass before they make their final landing that night. They will pick up troops and cargo at a score of different locations and deliver the cargo to another 20 locations.

Lunch is wherever the crew is at noon, and lunchtime is short. The bird is checked out and then takes off again.

The day ends between 7 and 8 p.m. Often the Chinook is landed after dark. When needed, the Chinooks make midnight runs to firebases under attack to deliver needed artillery and other ammunition.

It was by no means typical of the Hollywood glamor of combat flying. There was plenty of hard work and hour upon hour of flying, flying that keeps a division spread over 4,000 square miles supplied and functioning.
sion was moving its AO to the III Corps Tactical Zone. By November the battalion and its units were in place in the Quan Loi area. Battalion headquarters was at LZ Andy at Quan Loi. The base received incoming enemy rounds frequently in November and December, and the battalion quickly responded with massive return fire. After the base received 36 hits from 107 mm rockets on December 9 the battalion fired 1,000 rounds against suspected enemy locations. Numerous secondary locations were observed.

The 1st Bn, 21st Arty, continued to center its operations in Quan Loi during the early months of 1969. As February began, the battalion's organic batteries were spread throughout the division AO. Alpha Battery was at LZ Jake, Bravo at LZ Elrod and Charlie at LZ Carol. Bravo Battery fired 300 rounds in one mission on February 3 to help a 9th Infantry Division unit break contact.

Bravo Battery helped drive back an enemy ground attack against LZ Joy on June 12. In two hours of heavy fighting the enemy lost 35 men. Alpha Battery was at LZ Joe when the base took 200 enemy rockets and mortars and a company sized ground attack, which was easily repulsed.

In late June the battalion headquarters returned to Quan Loi. It remained there for the rest of 1969, but the firing batteries of the battalion continued to make frequent moves.

227th AHB
(Continued From P. 145)

during resupply missions. Low-level flying proved to be the key to avoiding enemy gunners, and the pilots brought much-needed supplies in to ground troops usually without incident.

Occasionally, however, the helicopters met with stiff enemy resistance, and when this was the case it was not unusual to hear of outstanding deeds by the men of the battalion.

In fall of 1968 the battalion moved south to the division's new area of operations, the III Corps Tactical Zone. Here it supported the division as it interdicted the enemy infiltration routes from Cambodia. The terrain was thickly jungled, and the jungle frequently concealed enemy machinegun positions. The battalion supported the 3rd Brigade and the 2nd Brigade in Binh Long and Phuoc Long Provinces.

Extensive use was made of the battalion's Nighthawk helicopters in III Corps. With a infrared light coupled with a starlight scope, a powerful spotlight, three M-60 machineguns and a minigun mounted in the rear cabin, the Nighthawks seriously hampered the enemy's ability to take advantage of darkness. A typical demonstration of Nighthawks' effectiveness came in October 1969 when a Charlie Company bird used its equipment to spot enemy supplies and movement of the Song Be River. With the help of other choppers and an air strike, the Nighthawks silenced the enemy. Twenty-eight dead enemy were found at first light.

As with other aviation units in the Cav, the 227th found that III Corps flying was different than "aviating" in I Corps. Despite the flatness of the terrain, the heavy, tangled vegetation and the dearth of landing zones quickly reduced the size of the basic combat assault flight. Moreover, pilots soon found that the enemy used .51 caliber anti-aircraft weapons to deadly effect around jungle clearings where Cav ground elements were inserted. This in turn called for greater reliance on the escort Cobra gunbirds from the battalion's Delta Company.

These problems caused the development of the six plus two formation as the combat assault standard in III Corps. The six were Hueys packed with infantry, the two were Delta Company gunships.

The Cobras made gun runs on the LZ just before the troops were inserted, making it difficult for the enemy to take advantage of the hiatus between ground assault prep fires and the actual landing. The Cobras also circled the LZ as the troops hit the ground, discouraging the enemy from firing on the Hueys at that most vulnerable moment.

The men of the battalion could meet the unique, once-in-a-tour challenge too. One downed Cobra, two trapped pilots and Sergeant Richard J. Korbel, a door-gunner with Company A, 227th Assault Helicopter Battalion, were the ingredients in a heroic history in August 1969.

A formation of 227th Hueys had just combat assaulted an infantry element near FSB Buttons when a "May Day" call flashed over the radio. A Cobra had just crashed nearby. The lead Huey, in which SGT Korbel was riding, flew to the scene.

"I had planned to rappel to the Cobra when we got close enough," said SGT Korbel, "but it turned out that we didn't have a rappelling rope. So the crew chief and I guided the pilots as close to the Cobra as we could and I hung from the skids and dropped about 15 feet to the ground."

The Cobra was lying on its left side. The two pilots, in a state of semi-consciousness, were still seated in the cockpit of their downed bird.

"The windows were jammed," said the door-gunner, "I looked around and spotted a part of the Cobra's radio lying on the ground. With it, I managed to break the glass and pull out the pilot."

By this time a Medevac bird was hovering above and lowered its jungle penetrator. Korbel secured the pilot to it and returned for the co-pilot. "I was really exhausted," said Korbel, "The co-pilot's feet were caught on the control stick and I just couldn't pull him loose."

The sergeant signalled the Medevac to send down a man to help, and succeeded in extracting him. The Huey followed the Medevac bird to the aid station, where the sergeant told doctors what had happened. Then the sergeant and crew took off for Song Be. They were needed for a new mission.

Throughout 1969 the 227th Assault Helicopter Battalion continued to serve the division by providing rapid, flexible assault transportation to any terrain, the key to the division's airability.
DIVARTY
(Continued From P. 113)

The Vietnamese government recognized DIVARTY's civic action program when the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry was presented to S-5 Captain Fred R. Roeske, Jr. The captain continued and expanded the medical and agricultural assistance program, and oversaw construction of a concrete schoolhouse to replace a wooden one being eaten away by termites. And he initiated the building of a bridge over the village creek to keep the village in communication with An Khe during the monsoon season.

For its activities from September 13, 1966, to July 31, 1967, DIVARTY Headquarters and Headquarters Battery received the Meritorious Unit Citation. The citation praised the unit for providing "superb artillery support" and for continually seeking improvements in artillery operations. The award specifically mentioned innovations by the intelligence section in determining targets and by the operations section in the training of new officers.

DIVARTY left II Corps in January 1968, as the division moved its headquarters to Camp Evans in I Corps. From here DIVARTY controlled the division's firing batteries as they helped blast the NVA from the city of Quang Tri and also from the walls of Hue, which the enemy had controlled since their Tet Offensive.

The forward command post moved to LZ Stud on April 5 to coordinate artillery support for the division's relief of the Marines at Khe Sanh. The fire support coordination section shifted to the A Shau Valley on April 27 to support the division's assault on that NVA infiltration route and supply center.

The various moves failed to stop DIVARTY from continuing its civic action programs. Now it directed its attention to the hamlet of Tan Nguyen, located near Camp Evans. The unit's laundry was taken to the hamlet, giving the citizens a larger income to improve their living conditions.

In November DIVARTY found itself relocated at Phuoc Vinh after the division's move to a new headquarters in III Corps Tactical Zone.

They also found themselves in the unusual position of being responsible for base security at Camp Gorvd, the division's Phuoc Vinh basecamp. Because the base was outside the areas of operation of the division's three infantry brigades, DIVARTY had operational control of the infantry battalion assigned to protect the base. This unique arrangement enabled DIVARTY to provide artillery support to the infantry unit much faster than would normally be expected, because under this arrangement requests for support did not have to go through infantry channels for clearance.

As 1969 ended, DIVARTY controlled three 105 mm battalions, one 155 mm battalion, 175 mm and eight-inch batteries, an aerial rocket artillery battalion and an observation battery. It was a combination of maximum flexibility and firepower, always ready for quick and massive support of division units in contacts anywhere in the area of operations.

1st of the 30th
(Continued From 125)

Ground attacks were not the everyday concern of the battalion, of course. Most days were devoted to providing support to infantry elements in contact, to preparations of landing zones, to protective fires for fire support bases and night positions and to fires on bunker complexes, enemy personnel and enemy infiltration routes. The battalion fired its 96 pound projectiles throughout III Corps, from Bien Hoa to the Cambodian border. The range and size of the 155 made it the most powerful gun organic to the 1st Cav Division, and it played an important role in the division's success in stopping the NVA.

This rice and salt, as well as other foodstuffs found, is turned over to the civilian population in GVN controlled areas. This amount of rice is substantial, with an average of more than 10 tons per month being distributed.

The division's 1st Brigade has aided the people of Tay Ninh in many ways. Among its finer programs have been the construction of the Tay Ninh Girls' High School and the Tay Ninh Technical High School.

The girls' high school has been described as "Vietnam's most modern school." It was built with funds supplied by Free World Military Armed Forces. The division supplied 50 percent of the funds necessary for the completion of the school. It now boasts 20 classrooms and is attended by some 1,100 students daily.

The Tay Ninh Technical High School had thousands of dollars of equipment on hand, but no one to install the necessary power generators and electrical wiring. The 1st Brigade stepped in.

Volunteer workers from the 229th Assault Helicopter Battalion metal shop helped with the installation of the various technical tools. Generator mechanics from headquarters company helped by installing the generators and working with Pacific Architects and Engineers in installing electrical wiring. The school was soon operating, providing an education for many young men in Tay Ninh and the surrounding areas.

The 2nd Brigade also assisted in the building of schools. Through the donation of more than 100,000 piasters by the 1st Cav, Chon Thanh District's first high school was built.

In addition to these isolated incidents, the Cav has built hundreds of schools throughout Vietnam, the structures rising wherever it is that the Cav calls home.

The 1st Air Cav's pacification efforts have proven successful in every area in which the division has operated. The hard work of 1st Air Cavalrymen has brought a new life into reality for many people in the Republic of Vietnam.

This new life is evidenced in no better way than by an examination of the hamlet of Trung Loi in Binh Long Province. Through the efforts of the division, this hamlet, long under the terrorism of the Viet Cong, held its first free elections in its 172 year history in 1969.

A new hamlet chief and his assistant were chosen. All the people of the village voted, and were especially pleased to do so. Their former chief had been assassinated by the VC just a few months previously.

The selection of his successor marked a new freedom: Freedom to choose their own leader, and a freedom from the terrorism of the Viet Cong.

Late in 1969, with the increasing emphasis on "Vietnamization" in the war, the 1st Air Cavalry Division began a new phase in their civic action programs. Civic action work is now done exclusively by the Republic of Vietnam’s Armed Forces, with the division civil affairs personnel acting in an advisory and support capacity.

With the Vietnamese forces taking charge of the nation's pacification programs, the people are easily able to identify with their government. It also serves to prevent the local nationals from developing a dependence on the American forces, a dependence that might prove disastrous when peace comes to the nation and the American forces are redeployed.

For example, rice now discovered in enemy caches by 1st Air Cavalrymen is turned over to elements of the ARVN forces which are working with the Cav in III Corps. They, in turn, distribute the rice throughout the villages and hamlets of the region.

Through this return to an advisory capacity, the FIRST TEAM is doing its part in establishing support for the Government of the Republic of Vietnam throughout Cav Country.
1st of the 9th
(Continued From P. 110)

22nd Regiment

The enemy unit had built themselves camouflaged bunkers and slit trenches to serve as a base for attack against the 3rd Brigade. That attack would never take place. Less than 24 hours after the squadron's spotting, 1,000 allied troopers were in the area. When the battle ended the 22nd NVA regiment had lost 650 men and its effectiveness as a fighting force.

In late 1967 a squadron scout pilot described his job. The description could just as well have been any other year. Said Warrant Officer Dana A. Graham, "You learn something each day when you fly in this country. You have to keep your mind open and keep watching for new things that can help you."

Every day for several hours Mr. Graham was at the controls, flying first and last light reconnaissance missions for base defense, general reconnaissance missions, and screening missions for advancing infantrymen.

What was a general reconnaissance mission like? "They'll assign you an area, say 10 square kilometers, and tell you to check it out for bunkers, or fortified villages or, of course, troops. In a dangerous area like this, you fly at low altitudes in a special pattern. You don't like to go over the same area twice because it may give someone a second chance to shoot at you."

"If there are hills, you stay as close to them as you can, and if there are trees you try to stay close to them, so they give you cover from one side."

Mr. Graham always flew as close to the ground as the terrain permitted, often within 10 feet of the surface. "It permits better observation, for one thing. And we say there's a dead man's zone between 50 and 1,000 feet; that's where the other guy can take his best shot at you."

Operation PERSHING ended in January 1968. Over the length of the operation the 1st Sqdn, 9th Cav, was credited with killing 513 NVA and 1,214 Viet Cong, and capturing 602 enemy soldiers, 13 crew-served weapons, 190 individual weapons and 2,927 rounds of ammo. The small but elite unit had accounted for 38 percent of the division's kills during the operation.

Operation WALLOWA also ended in January, and again it was the 1st Sqdn, 9th Cav, that had scored the operation's greatest successes. Bravo Troop had dispatched 503 NVA and 412 Viet Cong for 915 kills, taken 305 prisoners and captured 37 weapons.

The 1st Cavalry Division moved to Vietnam's I Corps in January 1968, coincidentally arriving just in time for the enemy's Tet Offensive. The squadron immediately found itself carrying out missions as part of Operation JEB STUART, aimed at driving the Communists from the Hue-Quang Tri area.

Delta Troop had the top priority task of keeping Route 1 open to insure the uninterrupted flow of supplies into Camp Evans, the division's basecamp. The enemy had interdicted the road between Hue and Camp Evans and effectively shut off resupply by that route. The only seaport remaining open in the I Corps was Quang Tri-Dong Ha.

To keep critical supplies flowing from this source Delta Troop started mine-sweeping operations on the road before dawn each day, and provided convoy escort from LZ Evans to Dong Ha. Despite enemy contact and extensive NVA attempts to mine the road, two convoys daily made the trip between Dong Ha and Camp Evans.

In the battle for Hue, one squadron pilot and his doorgunner probably set a record for the briefest time in enemy captivity. First Lieutenant William Babcock flew over Hue just after much of the city had been taken by NVA troops. As he approached the area he heard the chopper from behind a hedge... there were some farmers plowing and some cows, but the farmers left and the cows went away, and we started getting intense fire from behind a hedgerow.

"Suddenly," said Babcock, "our ship started to shudder, to tremble, and I couldn't get enough power to stay in the air so I had to let her down and we spiraled to the ground... there were some farmers plowing and some cows, but we couldn't get enough power to stay in the air."

"In a few minutes," he continued, "we were surrounded by a good-sized force and there was nothing we could do. They took us out of the chopper and set satchel charges to it."

Other squadron pilots had heard the lieutenant's radio calls for aid. Warrant Officer Thomas Maehrlein swooped out of the fog over Hue and saw the black smoke from the destroyed helicopter.

"There was no one near the ship," said Mr. Maehrlein, "but then we jumped over a clump of trees bordering a flat, sandy field we dropped onto about..."
50 Viet Cong in black pajamas and carrying weapons.

"They were in two groups of 25 men and when they saw us they scattered. We went for the front group and flew by as my doorgunners cut loose with the M-60s. That's when we saw two Americans with the front group break in another direction, hold up their hands and drop to the ground. It's just lucky we didn't shoot them."

The chopper made a tight turn and landed about 150 meters from a place where the NVA had disappeared, and, while the VC began blasting away at the ship on the ground, Babcock and his doorgunner scrambled aboard and Maehlrein took off. The gunners on the ship killed 10 VC.

"I'd say there were about 30 or 40 VC in the group," Babcock said afterward. "They had full gear and plenty of weapons, but when that chopper came in on them it was so sudden they simply panicked and ran."

Then the pilot sat back in his chair and wiped his forehead. "It's just good to be back," he said.

The squadron's record for enemy killed for February was the highest yet for the unit, 536. In early March the squadron continued operations in the JEB STU-ART AO. The squadron conducted extensive reconnaissance for all three brigades into base areas 101, 114, the Ba Long Valley and the coastal plains area.

In the latter half of March the squadron was given six days to prepare the area around Khe Sanh for what was to be Operation PEGASUS, the division's drive to relieve the beleaguered Marine base. The squadron's mission was to detect and destroy anti-aircraft and automatic weapons positions and enemy troop concentrations, to select and prepare brigade landing zones, select the air corridors into the LZs and neutralize all enemy that could influence the corridors. Operating from LZ Stud on March 24, the squadron employed one air strike an hour and stepped that up to an air strike every half hour on March 29. On March 31, D-Day, the squadron was employing one air strike every 15 minutes.

The thoroughness of this preparation was demonstrated on D-Day when no assault aircraft were lost to enemy fire as they brought the infantry into the LZs. After the division's infantry battalions landed the squadron resumed its normal role of reconnaissance and support.

One of the biggest finds of the entire Khe Sanh operation was made by Alpha Troop on the morning of April 10. A scout team spotted a Chicom truck loaded with ammunition and supplies. An air strike blew up the truck and caused several secondary explosions. As the scout team went in to check the area they spotted the tracks of a vehicle. At the end of the trail the team found a PT-76 tank armed with a 76 mm gun and twin .30 caliber machineguns. The tank was destroyed by artillery and air strikes and 15 NVA soldiers were killed. Additional tank tracks were discovered leading to the Laotion border.

When Operation PEGASUS ended, the squadron had accounted for 142 enemy casualties and had been responsible for the major contacts of the battle.

No sooner had PEGASUS ended than the squadron was called upon to prepare the A Shau Valley for a division drive to clear it of the NVA, for whom it was a haven and a staging ground. The squadron conducted extensive reconnaissance missions and employed 308 air strikes to destroy enemy positions. The reconnaissance indicated that enemy had a well established road and supply system in the valley.

The enemy did not permit the squadron to operate unhindered. When the squadron began its A Shau reconnaissance, the ships were frequently the object of well-aimed or radar controlled anti-aircraft fire. Over the radio one day came the laughing call of a pilot, "Help! They're shooting big beebees at me." When he returned to basecamp, it was discovered that the floor of his chopper had been ripped open by .50 caliber rounds.

A Charlie Troop scout team received heavy anti-aircraft fire from 37 mm cannons. Organic weapons and air strikes silenced the enemy guns. When the scout team checked the damage they found that the enemy position consisted of three cannons positioned in triangle composed of reinforced earthworks with numerous bunkers and fighting positions.

Heavy anti-aircraft guns were not all the squadron found in the A Shau Valley. Charlie Troop ships spotted five PT-76 tanks withdrawing from a truck stop. One of the tanks was destroyed before the rest escaped over the Laotion border. On the 25th of April squadron elements located 50 flatbed and five other trucks, all of which were destroyed or captured.

The squadron also made the sighting on April 26 that unearthed the first of A Shau's big caches. Among the items captured were 600 122 mm rockets, 315 Soviet AK-47 rifles, 225 pounds of medical supplies, 2,000 anti-aircraft rounds and 20,000 small arms rounds.

Delta Troop recoiless rifles provided anti-tank protection to the 3rd ARVN Regiment, working in the southern portion of the valley.

As the A Shau operation ended squadron elements returned to the Khe
Sanh and Hue areas.

Alpha Troop landed in the Da Nang area of operations on August 1 to help the Marines. On the first day of the joint action the troop initiated a contact that left 72 NVA dead. August 18, when the operation terminated, Alpha Troop had accounted for 159 enemy casualties.

In late August an Alpha Troop Pink Team was conducting Snatch operations with an infantry squad in a Huey. As the Huey landed so the infantry could pick up a suspect, they were attacked by an enemy battalion. An attempt to insert the rest of the platoon was aborted by heavy automatic weapons fire. Delta Troop, acting as a quick reaction force, was successfully inserted nearby, and in conjunction with other division elements inflicted 144 casualties on the enemy.

The squadron continued to provide general support for Operation JEB STUART III until it was completed in October. In the last week of October the squadron was given 24 hours notice to move its troops south to III Corps, the division's new area of operations. By November 1 Bravo Troop was operational at Quan Loi. The other troops quickly followed: Alpha Troop to Tay Ninh, Delta and Charlie Troops to Phuoc Vinh.

Squadron elements were on a general reconnaissance north of the Loc Ninh rubber plantation in late November when they spotted a small village containing approximately 40 military age males and 25 bicycles. An armored cavalry unit nearby was notified and began moving into the area, killing more than 60 NVA. The squadron placed air strikes and artillery on the enemy. The Communists responded with 12.75 armor piercing rounds. The Pink Teams remained on station until resistance broke and the battle ended. Results showed the enemy lost numerous soldiers and several crew served weapons.

The day after Christmas brought no cheer to one NVA unit near Loc Ninh. Charlie Troop pilot Warrant Officer John Jelich was flying his ship at treetop level when he spotted 45 to 50 individuals sitting below in what appeared to be a training class. Warrant Officer Michael Myhre, piloting the Cobra half of the Pink Team, lowered his bird's nose and rolled in, dumping three pairs of rockets on the location.

Despite enemy automatic weapons fire, Myhre struck again. "I rolled in and expended the rest of my rockets and sprayed the area with minigun and 40 mm cannon fire."

By then a second Pink Team arrived from Phuoc Vinh. "I came into the area at what I thought to be a safe 2,000 feet when I started receiving a heavy volume of automatic weapons fire," said Chief Warrant Officer Thomas Harnisher of the second team's recon ship. "I could see the tracers whizzing all around my ship. I pulled out of the line of fire, dipped my nose toward the ground and sprayed the area with my minigun."

He was followed by his Cobra ship, which rolled in and expended its rockets on the fleeing enemy. The gunships accounted for 41 enemy dead.

The squadron was there for the first important action of 1969. East of Loc Ninh it combined with a long range reconnaissance patrol to kill 39 NVA attempting to infiltrate along the Serges Jungle Highway on January 5. Most of the squadron's activities were still centered around Operation TOAN THANG II, aimed at blocking enemy infiltration routes to Saigon and preventing any repetition of the Tet Offensive of 1968. By the time the operation was finished, the squadron's reconnaissance had resulted in numerous significant contacts, the uncovering of several large staging areas and bunker complexes, and the destruction of rice and equipment caches. Squadron organic weapons were responsible for the deaths of 557 NVA and 101 VC.

Delta Troop smashed an enemy ambush on February 23 near Quan Loi. A Delta Troop platoon was making a recon-in-force through the wooded areas surrounding the 2nd Brigade basecamp when the enemy struck. The troop immediately returned fire from its jeep-mounted M-60 machineguns and 106 mm recoilless rifles. The mortar and infantry sections of the troop added firepower as the enemy began dropping RPGs into the midst of the American force.

Staff Sergeant John H. Hubbard learned that his platoon leader and medic were wounded. He hurried forward to help them and the other wounded, giving them first aid and making repeated trips under fire to return them to a safer area.

Another troop platoon moved in to provide relief. SSG Hubbard again exposed himself to direct the relief platoon into an effective firing position. Sergeant Richard A. Macleod wheeled his recoilless rifle jeep into place and got off five well-aimed rounds before his jeep was hit by an RPG. SGT Macleod repositioned his crew behind cover, then began carrying ammo to the forward

Every enemy mortar round captured means one less round to dodge later. This cache found by the 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry, will result in a lot of peace of mind somewhere in Cav Country.
crew chief Specialist Four Larry Kemplers began throwing unnecessary gear and ordnance from the bird, anticipating a forced landing. The gunner, Sergeant John K. Binegar, sprayed machinegun fire at the enemy positions below.

After the helicopter staggered two and a half miles through the sky the crew saw a break in the treeline, a "clearing" covered with six-foot high elephant grass and 10-foot tall stumps. Stegall brought the chopper down, maintaining control and landing safely despite the sideways position. The bird and crew were soon evacuated to Tay Ninh.

The squadron deprived the enemy of important food and ammunition caches in May. Pink Teams spotted part of the large supply point in an area ripped open by a B-52 strike. Hovering at treetop level in their LOH birds the scouts followed trails as small as eight inches wide to find and judge the age of footprints, bicycle tracks, bunkers and the cache itself.

The tracks were only hours old. Some of the bunkers had been built less than 48 hours before. Rocket propelled grenades and AK-47 and mortar rounds were found in their factory cases. More than 10 tons of rice were spotted initially. Air Force bombers blasted the area again that night.

The next day the Troop B Blues were dropped in. Less than a kilometer south of the abandoned LZ they found 500 bags of rice totalling 50 tons, and more rockets, grenades and mortar rounds. Further down the trail they destroyed another 15 tons of rice. Similar finds by squadron elements were frequent during this period.

Throughout the summer of 1969 the squadron’s reconnaissance served as the division’s “eyes and ears” and frequently as one of its deadliest weapons, as when Charlie Troop discovered that you don’t always meet the nicest people on a Honda.

A Charlie Troop Pink Team had been flying a bomb damage assessment run over a B-52 strike area. Suddenly LOH pilot Warrant Officer Clifford Lee spotted two enemy soldiers. As Captain Gayle Jennings’ Cobra rolled in hot, killing both enemy, the LOH scooted away to avoid its companion ship’s fire. From its new position the LOH crew spotted about 30 NVA, fully equipped with packs and riding bicycles and Hondas along a heavily traveled trail. Mr. Lee radioed for the Cobras to strike again. When the day was over 14 NVA were dead.

In the last four months of 1969 the units of the squadron saw much of the action as they made many important findings for other division units to follow up and carried on numerous small engagements on their own. In the last week of September the enemy kept making the mistake of firing on squadron helicopters. The squadron generally saw to it that they would never shoot
again. By the end of the week the squadron had accounted for 25 percent of the casualties inflicted on the enemy.

The next week the NVA lost 149 soldiers to the 1st Cav Division. One hundred of those casualties were caused by the squadron.

The last half of October was another outstanding period for the squadron. It again accounted for most of the action in the division AO. Alpha Troop, which made 74 of the division’s 207 kills in the week ending October 24, discovered an elaborate NVA staging area 22 miles northwest of Tay Ninh. It included a barbed wire and trenchline perimeter encircling a 1,000 meter area in which were several sheet metal hooches and canvas tents.

In the last week of October the division saw more action than any other division in Vietnam, and the responsibility for most of the action was again the squadron’s. One high point came when a Bravo Troop Pink Team spotted and killed three NVA near Song Be. An hour later the team killed four more enemy nearby.

Later that afternoon 15 NVA were spotted in the open and engaged. As artillery and air strikes were called in the scout helicopter remained on station, drawing the enemy fire to pinpoint their location. Before the day was over Bravo Troop had eliminated 41 NVA.

Three division fire support bases repulsed ground attacks on November 4, 1969. As the attackers retreated they were harassed by squadron Pink Teams. Warrant Officer William McIntosh described the actions of the first Alpha Troop Pink Teams as, “Just like a turkey shoot.” Alpha Troop caught enemy forces withdrawing from FSB Ike.

Said Cobra pilot First Lieutenant Steve Justus, “We caught the first group in a trenchline about 300 miles north of Ike, then we just followed the trails to the north and kept picking them off.”

“As they got farther away from the firebase, they started grouping together and heading for several small bunker complexes. Only one group fired at us: the rest appeared to be taken by surprise. One of them even looked up at me like he didn’t believe we would shoot him,” said Mr. McIntosh.

Later in November an Alpha Troop Pink Team was flying a routine reconnaissance mission over dense canopy jungle when the LOH received .30 caliber fire. Marking the suspected enemy position with smoke grenades, the LOH swung into a hard right turn as the Cobra rolled in, rockets and minigun blazing. The Cobra killed 15 of the NVA soldiers and destroyed their machinegun position.

A few days later another A Troop LOH spotted an enemy position. The Cobras made a pass but was about 100 meters off the mark. First Lieutenant Ronald Whitmores, the pilot, said it was easy to see just how far off he was when the entire woodline to his left opened fire with AK-47 and automatic weapons.

“I thought they had me for sure,” recalled the lieutenant. “It looked like bushel baskets of tracers coming up at me.”

The tracers didn’t keep the pilot from circling for another run. Before the action was over 21 NVA were killed and Alpha Troop Blues found numerous blood trails and fresh bunkers. The Blues were extracted as the 4th Company, 11th ARVN Airborne, moved in.

Alpha Troop struck again in December, three of its Cobras blasting a group of 45 to 50 NVA soldiers seen setting up mortar positions northwest of FSB Jerri. Fifteen NVA were killed and the positions destroyed.

During the last weeks of 1969 Bravo Troop concentrated on interdicting the Jolley Trail, named after the troop’s commander, Major Charles A. Jolley.

Elements of the troop discovered the enemy infiltration route in the Duc Phong area in November. The high-speed trail was generally about four feet wide, with bunker complexes every few hundred meters as way stations and bombshelters. Woven bamboo mats covered the trail, enabling wheeled traffic to pass over it in the rainy season.

Bravo Troop applied constant pressure to the trail, blasting away its overhead concealment, blowing up its bamboo bridges, and calling in air strikes and artillery on the bunker complexes. The Bravo Blues were frequently inserted to explore the network of trails and check the bunker complexes for supplies and signs of occupation.

The Jolley Trail had been the enemy’s latest effort to find a safe way through “Cav Country.” Bravo Troop was making sure the effort was no more successful than the others.

It was yet another instance of the outstanding performance—whether the assignment be reconnaissance, troop support, or lightning fast infantry operations—that typifies the 1st Sqdn, 9th Cav, an elite unit in an elite division.