

FOR THE MEN, AND THEIR  
FAMILIES, OF THE 2ND BATTALION,  
173D AIRBORNE BRIGADE (SEP)

**WE TRY  
HARDER!**

**2/503d**  
**VIETNAM**  
★ ★ ★ ★ ★ *newsletter*



August 2012, Issue 44

Contact: [rto173d@cfl.rr.com](mailto:rto173d@cfl.rr.com)

See all issues to date at the 503<sup>rd</sup> Heritage Battalion web site:

[http://corregidor.org/VN2-503/newsletter/issue\\_index.htm](http://corregidor.org/VN2-503/newsletter/issue_index.htm)



REUTERS/Yuri Gripas



2/503d **VIETNAM** Newsletter / August 2012 – Issue 44

Page 1 of 60

# Chaplain's Corner

## *Putting Holes in the Darkness*

It's good to be back with you! Maybe there are some things that crash in on your schedule and you say "I wish I could get out of that or put it off!" Got to tell you that working on this column is certainly not that kind of chore. I enjoy the opportunity to share with you, and yes, I probably get more out of this than you do!



Cap

Recall we're using Shakespeare's words, "*We few, we happy few, we band of brothers*", as our theme for this series of articles that I have the privilege to share with you. If you have thoughts or ideas about this and where we should go, please drop me a note or call. Thanks.

In our three previous articles we've walked through "*Band of Brothers*", "*Got Your 6*", and "*Leave No One Behind*." In this article I'd like you to walk with me as we think about and hopefully commit ourselves to "*Putting Holes in the Darkness*." There is a Scripture that should serve as an intro to this message: "*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.*" (Matthew 5:16 NKJV). Now, here's a story I'd like to share with you which follows that Scripture and one which challenges me, for sure. It came from a devotion I use each morning and I'll tell you about it at the bottom. But, here is how it reads...

*"One night when Robert Louis Stevenson was a small boy, his nanny called him to come to bed. Oblivious to her summons, he was staring at something outside his nursery window. The nanny walked over, stood at his shoulder, and inquired patiently, 'Robert, what are you looking at?' The little boy replied, without taking his eyes away from the window, exclaiming in wonder as he pointed to the lamplighter who was lighting the streetlamp, 'Look, Nanny! That man is putting holes in the darkness.'"* (a)

We might not be able to change the problems, conditions and needs of our city, state or even our chapter, but surely we can put a hole in the darkness. We can help fill the needs that exist there. What about the widow who is struggling to raise her children, or the

spouse who is looking after a wounded warrior? Might we not put a hole in the darkness that weights her down? Isn't there a wounded warrior (Iraq, Afghanistan, Vietnam, Korea or WWII) who needs help getting to the hospital, the doctor, the store, the chapter meeting or just to get outdoors? Just maybe we can help, *turn on the light and help*.

I remember coming home from one of the 173d Abn Reunions and while waiting for transportation, I spent a few minutes with the president of our Association, Roy Scott. He shared with me a thought I'll never forget. "*All saints have a past and all sinners have a future,*" he said. I believe we're called to reach out and share the gospel. Of course, that does take a little courage – right? A good friend of mine from schooldays (Duke – a Marine – oh well), shared with me what it means and takes to have courage. He used Joshua as an example and used these words from the Bible, "*Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor dismayed for the Lord will be with you where you go.*" (Joshua 1:90)

Duke then went on to say, "*We military guys know the importance and need to be strong (fit)...mentally, morally, emotionally, spiritually, and physically...and that could preach by itself. And we all want to be courageous. But, why did God need to remind Joshua to be courageous? Because we all get scared and feel inadequate at times for the tasks before us. And then there is the fact that courage is not just a battlefield requirement. We all need to 'man up' in everyday life. As fathers, leaders, bosses, husbands, or just being God's man in everything we do.*"

*"Turn on the light! Share what Jesus means to you and give God's Word to someone else...not everyone has been attracted to the Light, but one by one people have come to Him for truth, wisdom, salvation, and eternal life."* (a)

Would you agree that each of us has been called to reach out and to serve? Maybe you'd also agree that the answer for *who* is being called is something we both acknowledge -- because those being called are...

***We few, we happy few, we band of brothers.***

**Rev. Jack Kelley, LTC (Ret)**

CO A/2/503d, '66

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2/503d **VIETNAM** Newsletter / August 2012 – Issue 44

Page 2 of 60

# Kit Carson Scout Frees Troop

By PFC Paul Sheehan

BONG SON — A former Viet Cong Officer recently saved the life of a Paratrooper who was caught in a deadly booby trap. Nguyen Thanh a Kit Carson Scout, crawled 30 feet to clip a trip wire entangled in the boots of SP4 Charles W. Scudder of Kansas City, Mo. *"I was moving toward a gap in a hedgerow when it happened,"* said Scudder. *"I pushed aside a bamboo stick, took a couple of steps and heard a sharp click. All I could think of was booby trap!"*

## Stood Rigid

Scudder then looked down and saw a thin strand of wire caught on his left boot and twisted behind his right foot. Keeping his cool, Scudder turned his head to the soldier behind him. *"I think I'm in a booby trap,"* he said. *"Get some help."* For the next 20 minutes the 25-year-old paratrooper with Alpha Company, 2/503d Infantry waited rigidly in place afraid that the slightest twitch might set off the bomb. The area surrounding Scudder was cleared of all troops and an Explosives Ordnance team was summoned.

## Examine Trip Wire

*"My feet were stationary but I think my knees were knocking,"* recalled Scudder afterward. *"I tried smoking a cigarette."*

The explosives experts moved in and examined the wire, but were unable to see the trap because of camouflage. It was then that Thanh, a former VC Company Commander who had rallied to the Allied Forces, arrived and inspected the situation. The 38-year-old Thanh urged SP4 Scudder to remain rigid and backed off quickly.

Minutes later Thanh returned to the area with a pair of scissors. However, fearing that Scudder might set off the bomb at any second, this time the Kit Carson Scout inched forward on his belly. Reaching Scudder, he slipped his hand between the Paratrooper's legs, and with a simple clip of the scissors cut the trip wire.

Together Thanh and Scudder inspected the disengaged trap before Thanh disarmed it. Called a butterfly bomb, the trap was rigged so that the wire would pull a piece of wood allowing the trap to snap shut and detonate the charge -- Scudder heard the small stick slip from its position and stopped in time to keep it from completely dislodging. The slightest movement and the stick would have slipped out.



**SAVES LIFE – Charles W. Scudder of Alpha Company, 2/503d Infantry, clasps Kit Carson Scout, Nguyen Thanh, who freed the paratrooper from the jaws of an armed booby trap.** (Photo by PFC Paul Sheehan)

*"I'm glad to be of help to the American troops,"* said Thanh who was once trained to set up similar traps. *"I will gladly go out of my way to teach them anything I know."* After freeing Scudder, Thanh found four more booby traps in the area.

Thanh was killed a few days later on a similar mission.

[Source: *Fire Base 173*, 16 September 1968]

American Legion National Commander Fang A. Wong is calling on Congress to pass a new version of the Stolen Valor Act, one that would stand up to constitutional scrutiny. The U.S. Supreme Court issued a "plurality" ruling Thursday morning, a 6-3 decision that protects those who lie about their military experiences, including those who falsely claim to have received combat wounds and medals, in order to advance their careers.



*"While we are obviously saddened and aggrieved by the overall decision in this case, we felt good about the portions of the decision which suggest that a more narrowly tailored bill, which incorporates traditional fraud elements, would be upheld,"* Wong said. *"Since the vast bulk of the more notorious valor thieves engage in this to gain something of value as a result, they will not be able to claim legal immunity once a new bill is passed."*





## ~ Story Behind the Mustang ~



This yellow Mustang was on display during the 173d Airborne Brigade Association reunion this past June in Lexington, KY. It was originally purchased by Michael Lehmiller, who was killed in action on 21 August 2005 while serving with the 2/503d of the 173d ABCT in Afghanistan. As a tribute to and in honor and memory of his son, Robert Lehmiller transformed the automobile into this moving memorial. (Photos by Lin Basham, daughter of WWII 503<sup>rd</sup> Trooper, Ray Basham)

**Sgt. Michael Robert Lehmiller**, 23, of Tampa, passed away August 21, 2005 in Afghanistan from injuries he received during hostile fire. He was born in Tampa, and was preceded in death by his grandparents, Charles and June Faraci, and Doug and Donna Vest. He is survived by his loving mother, Gail Michaels (Paul); sister, Shelly Castro (Noriel); niece, Amber Castro; stepbrother, Paul Michaels Jr.; stepsister, Christie Kirkendoll; father, Robert Lehmiller; stepsister, Crystal Clark (Jared); brothers, William and Elliott Lehmiller. He is also survived by all of his Army buddies, and many friends, aunts and uncles.



### ~ IT IS THE SOLDIER ~

*It is the Soldier not the Reporter  
who has given us Freedom of the press*

*It is the Soldier not the Poet who has given us  
Freedom of speech*

*It is the Soldier not the Campus organizer who  
gives Us the freedom to demonstrate*

*It is the Soldier who salutes The flag, who  
serves beneath The flag, and whose coffin  
is Draped by the flag, who allows  
The protester to burn the flag.*



From *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, December 4, 1965

## No Bunny for B Co.

CHICAGO (UPI) – Playboy magazine had had news Thursday for B Co.—no bunny.

B Co., 2d Bn, 503d Inf, 173d Airborne Brigade, now stationed in the Republic of Vietnam, bought a lifetime subscription to the magazine, because an advertisement said that such subscriptions' first copy is delivered personally by a Playboy bunny.

So they subscribed and asked the magazine "how about it?"

Said Playboy today: "We can't send a girl."



*Playboy Playmate of the Year Joe Collins passing in review of Bravo Bulls at Camp Zinn, 1966.*



Jo visiting WIA

## ~ Birthdays Ain't No Bull ~

(July birthday wishes from former B/2/503 CO, Les Brownlee, to his former RTO, Larry Paladino)

Larry,  
Congratulations on your birthday! I didn't know that we almost shared birthdays as mine was yesterday. Thanks for all you did for me in humping my radio through a bunch of tough times many years ago. You and "Cotanch" were the absolute best at that and I think many times about the great job that you all did for me and B Company. One of the toughest decisions I ever made was selecting which of you got to kiss our Playmate, Jo Collins. As we walked off the LZ, and approached her (and all the press), I knew it couldn't be me so I had to pick someone – I quickly narrowed the choice down to my two RTO's. I think I reached back and selected you. Who knew I would make you world-famous!! Anyway, all the best to you and thanks again for your great service to your country many years ago in a country far away. All the best, Les

**Les Brownlee, COL (Ret)**

**CO B/2/503d**

**Former Acting Secretary of the Army**



2/503 Bravo Bull Larry Paladino & Playmate Jo Collins 1966.  
"Just following orders."







# San Diego 173d Airborne Association

## *"Supporting Our Wounded Warrior Fund Raiser"*

### Dinner Dance, Saturday, August 25, 2012

### American Legion Post 149, Escondido, CA



### Pre-Registration Required for Saturday

#### ~ What ~

Saturday Dinner and Dance tickets: \$12.00 per person

Social time starts at 2:00 pm in Club Room

Dinner seating at 4:30 pm, Main Hall

#### ~ When & Where ~

Saturday, August 25, 2012

Posting of the Colors at 5:00 pm

Dinner at 5:15 pm

Dance at 7:00 pm – 11:00 pm

#### **American Legion**

**230 Park Avenue**

**Escondido, CA 92025**

**1-760-745-1159**

#### ~ Directions ~

North County Hwy 5 or 15 South, to Hwy 78 East to Broadway. Right on Broadway two blocks. Left on Park Avenue, half block to American Legion.

#### ~ Hotels ~

Please make your own reservations and verify room rate.



##### **Motel 6**

(\$53-\$59)

(760-745-9252)

##### **Super 8**

(\$79-\$89)

(760-747-3711)

##### **Best Value**

(\$75-\$78)

(760-745-9252)

#### Other Events ~ Pay These at Door

Sunday Post Breakfast (7:30 am to 10:30 am)

Club Room Open 10:00 am

#### Contact for Information

Gilbert Reynoso, Chapter President

Phn: 1-760-294-8741

Cell: 1-760-500-1944

E-mail: [g\\_reynoso\\_r@yahoo.com](mailto:g_reynoso_r@yahoo.com)

#### ~ Registration Form ~ For Saturday, Aug. 25th

(Please Print & Copy Form for Additional Names)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Unit: \_\_\_\_\_

Guest 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Guest 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Guest 3: \_\_\_\_\_

Guest 4: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed is my check for \_\_\_\_ people at \$12. Per Person  
in the total amount of: \$\_\_\_\_\_

**Please make check payable and mail to:**

**San Diego 173d Airborne Association**

**2400 W. Valley Parkway**

**Sp# 24**

**Escondido, CA 92029**

***Come and enjoy the fun....&  
Support Our Wounded Warriors***



**TOP SECRET**

(Declassified, photos added)

## THE HISTORY OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

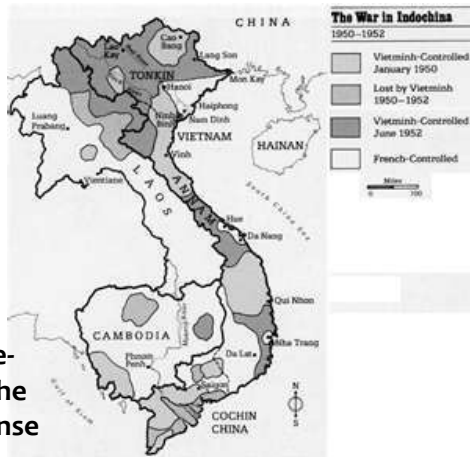
### THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF AND THE WAR IN VIETNAM 1971 – 1973

By Willard J. Webb  
Historical Division, Joint Secretariat  
Joint Chiefs of Staff



As the year 1971 began, the US involvement in Vietnam was over twenty years old and US troops had been fighting there for more than six years. To that point, 44,249 members of the US armed forces had lost their lives in hostile action in a war that had cost the United States an estimated \$104.4 billion. Moreover, the war had stirred great political dissent at home and reaped public criticism of the United States around the world from friends and enemies alike.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff had participated in the decisions on Vietnam from the very start of the US commitment. At each stage in the deepening involvement, they gave the Secretary of Defense and the President their opinions and recommendations and, once the combat phase began, they directed the operations. But the ultimate objective in Vietnam was a political one and, in the final decisions, political rather than military factors prevailed. This was true not only in the period when the United States gave only assistance and advice but subsequently when the United States was engaged in ground and air combat in Vietnam.



The US commitment in Vietnam dated back to 1950 when the United States began a program of economic and military aid for Indochina. The military portion was channeled through the French to assist in building indigenous Indochinese forces to oppose the communist-controlled Viet Minh who were fighting to oust the French of Indochina. President Truman and his advisers, including the Joint Chiefs of Staff, had hoped this aid would prevent Indochina from falling under communist domination. The initial contingent of a Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG), consisting of 38 US Army, Navy, and Air Force officers and men, arrived in Vietnam during August 1950.



The Viet Minh

Despite the US assistance, the French position in Indochina deteriorated during the next several years. An international conference of concerned nations meeting in Geneva considered the Indochina problem during the spring and early summer of 1954. The resulting Accords, signed on 20 July 1954, confirmed the independence of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, which France had already granted, and provided for an end to hostilities throughout all three Indochinese states.

With regard to Vietnam, the Geneva Accords divided the country along the 17<sup>th</sup> Parallel with the Viet Minh regrouping to the north and the French forces to the south. No new foreign military personnel or equipment would be introduced into Vietnam and an International Control Commission would ensure compliance. Further, the question of a final political settlement for all of Vietnam was to be resolved by internationally-supervised elections two years hence.

(continued....)



The United States did not sign the Accords, but did pledge to respect them.

The Geneva Accords ended the French control of Indochina. Thereafter, the Vietnam, pro-Western factions formed the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) below the 17<sup>th</sup> parallel under the leadership of Ngo Dinh Diem while, to the north, the Viet Minh established the communist Democratic Republic of Vietnam headed by Ho Chi Minh. But the communists did not abandon their objectives of taking over all of Vietnam, and the insurgents remained active in the south. As a consequence, the provisions of the Geneva Accords for political settlement in Vietnam were never implemented, and Vietnam remained divided. The United States provided the Republic of Vietnam military assistance under the terms of the Accords. The objective was to build an indigenous South Vietnamese armed force that could meet both the continuing internal insurgency and the external threat from the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.



Ngo Dinh Diem meets with Ike in the U.S. The Vietnamese president's fate would soon be written.

The latter years of the decade of the 1950s brought a period of relative calm to Vietnam and the Republic of Vietnam appeared to be succeeding in controlling the communist insurgency. But beneath this calm, the insurgents, now called the Viet Cong, were carefully organizing and planning and by 1957 had launched a campaign of terrorism and subversion. Encouraged and supported by Ho Chi Minh and his government to the north, the Viet Cong slowly, but steadily, increased their activities and were ready for full-scale warfare against the Republic of Vietnam by the beginning of 1960. Evidence of this turn of events came in January 1960 when the Viet Cong successfully attacked a RVN regimental command post in Tay Ninh.

In the succeeding months, the Viet Cong pressed ahead with their campaign and the situation in South Vietnam continued to deteriorate. The Geneva Accords had restricted the presence of foreign military personnel in Vietnam and, to this stage, the United States had meticulously limited the number of military advisers sent to Vietnam. Now, however, the United States increased military assistance to the Republic of Vietnam, supplying additional equipment and more advisers, and soon all pretense of compliance with the Geneva restrictions was abandoned.



Soldiers and civilians helped the war effort by taking supplies south on the Ho Chi Minh Trail (1959).

Still the military situation deteriorated and, in November 1961, President Kennedy approved greatly expanded assistance for South Vietnam on condition that President Diem would carry out various internal political and social reforms. Specifically, the United States undertook actions to increase the airlift available to the South Vietnamese, to improve air reconnaissance and air-ground support, to supply better coastal surveillance and control, to enhance the RVN intelligence capabilities, and to train paramilitary forces. Although no US combat forces were involved, US advisers, for the first time, began to accompany RVN forces on combat missions. Consequently, the United States experienced the first casualties as the result of hostile action in Vietnam in 1961.

*(continued....)*





The President's November 1961 decisions governed the pattern of US involvement in Vietnam well into 1963, and the United States sent vast quantities of materiel and increasing numbers of US advisers. The rapidly expanding US presence in Vietnam required revised command arrangement, and on 8 February 1962 the US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (USMACV), replaced the MAAG. The new organization was a subordinate unified command under the Commander in Chief, Pacific (CINCPAC), who in turn reported to the Joint Chiefs of Staff; the new commander, COMUSMACV, exercised operational command over all US military forces in Vietnam.

President Diem never carried out the promised internal reforms, and any military progress achieved in South Vietnam by 1963 was dissipated by the growing political turmoil and opposition to Ngo Dinh Diem. The dissatisfaction culminated in a coup and the assassination of the South Vietnamese President on 1 November 1963, but the removal of Diem did not bring political stability to the Republic of Vietnam. The Viet Cong took advantage of the situation, increasing military activity throughout South Vietnam, and North Vietnam stepped up assistance to the insurgents in the south.

To meet the worsening situation, the United States augmented existing efforts and undertook additional ones during the early months of 1964 to assist the Republic of Vietnam. Specifically included was support for the South Vietnamese pacification program to win control of the countryside. It was at this point that the United States began to consider possible retaliatory action, including air strikes, against North Vietnam.

General William C. Westmoreland, USA, who became COMUSMACV on 20 June 1964, immediately requested almost 5,000 additional forces and more cargo aircraft and helicopters to give the RVN forces increased logistics and airlift support. The request was quickly approved with the added troops arriving in Vietnam during the period August 1964 through February 1965. When the movement was complete, the United States had more than 23,000 men in Vietnam.

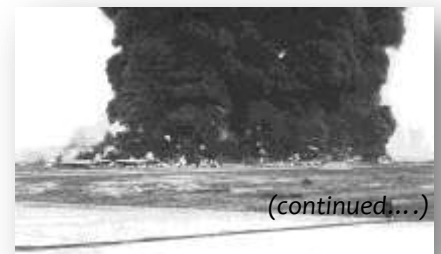


Westmoreland at an outpost in Vietnam, May 1964.

Meantime, on 2 August 1964, and again two days later, North Vietnamese patrol craft had attacked US destroyers in the Gulf of Tonkin off Vietnam. In retaliation, the United States carried out air strikes against targets in North Vietnam. In further reaction to the North Vietnamese attacks, President Johnson asked the Congress for and received, with only two dissenting votes, authority *"to take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression."*

During the fall of 1964, political instability in South Vietnam continued and the Viet Cong showed no letup in their drive to take over the country. A Viet Cong attack on 1 November on Bien Hoa Air Base outside of Saigon, which killed four US servicemen and wounded 72 more, brought an immediate recommendation by the field commanders and the Joint Chiefs of Staff for reprisals against North Vietnam. President Johnson did not approve such action, but the Joint Chiefs of Staff and CINCPAC proceeded with plans for both retaliatory strikes and an extended air campaign against North Vietnam to check the continuing flow of war materiel to the south.

Burning Aircraft on ramp at Bien Hoa AB after explosion.



By the beginning of 1965, the communists seemed headed toward victory in South Vietnam. Political turmoil hindered the effectiveness of the Republic of Vietnam, and the Viet Cong clearly held the initiative. They controlled one quarter of the population and half of the territory of South Vietnam. No longer restricting themselves to hit-and-run tactics, they were beginning to operate in regiment-size forces, portending a more intense phase of the war. Materiel support of the Viet Cong flowed in by land and sea from the north in increasing quantities, and captured documents and other sources indicated that policy direction and strategy came from Hanoi as well. Moreover, by January 1965, though still undetected by the US and South Vietnamese forces, regular North Vietnamese units were in the south for the first time. Clearly, stronger action would be needed if South Vietnam was to be prevented from falling under communist domination.

On 7 February 1965, the Viet Cong shelled a US adviser compound and airfield at Pleiku, killing eight US military personnel, wounding 108 others, and destroying 20 US aircraft. This time a JCS recommendation for reprisal was heeded, and the United States responded with air strikes in the lower portion of North Vietnam, the movement of a HAWK missile battalion to Vietnam, and the evacuation of all US dependents from Vietnam. Another Viet Cong attack against a US installation at Qui Nhon three days later brought the US decision for a sustained bombing campaign against the north. After several delays, regular bombing of North Vietnam began on 2 March 1965. Nicknamed ROLLING THUNDER, the initial missions were against military targets in the southern portion of North Vietnam.

Facing the threat of continuing Viet Cong attack of US installations, as well as possible North Vietnamese reprisals against the ROLLING THUNDER bombing, General Westmoreland wanted US combat troops to protect US personnel and installations. Accordingly, in mid-February 1965, the United States began deployment of combat forces to Vietnam. In the following several months, both US Marine Corps and Army troops were sent, raising the US force level in Vietnam to more than 50,000 men by early June. In July, further deployments were approved to provide a force of approximately 187,000 men by the end of the year. Accompanying this buildup came the decision to commit US forces to combat operations in South Vietnam. As early as 22 April 1965, a small patrol of US Marines and RVN troops engaged in a fire fight with the Viet Cong near Da Nang and by June US forces were regularly participating in search and destroy missions.



Operation 'Rolling Thunder'. B-52 Stratofortress over Vietnam.

From mid-1965 through early 1968, the United States waged a full-scale war in South Vietnam and a gradually expanding air campaign against the north. In that period, US troops strength rose to almost 500,000 men and the ROLLING THUNDER bombing grew from initial strikes against military targets in the lower part of North Vietnam to unlimited bombing throughout the entire country except for prohibited areas around Hanoi and Haiphong and a buffer zone along the Chinese border.

(continued...)



2/503 troopers sailing to Vietnam for 'temporary duty', 1965.  
(Jim "Top" Dresser, A/HHC/2/503d, photos)





During these years, the United States followed a policy of gradualism with the escalation proceeding in steps. At each one the President, usually against the advice of the Joint Chief of Staff, limited the US commitment only to decide some months later that additional US forces or expanded bombing, or both, were needed to force the enemy to cease his aggression. But, by the time these actions were implemented, the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese had similarly increased their strength.

Nonetheless, the military situation in South Vietnam by the beginning of 1968 had been turned around. The US and South Vietnamese forces now held the initiative. They had pushed enemy main forces back to border areas, and enemy control of the population and territory had been slowly but steadily reduced. Even so, the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese showed no readiness to give up the struggle. Both public and private initiatives by the United States had been bluntly rejected in the years 1965 through 1967.

Dramatic evidence of the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese determination came in February 1968. During the Tet holiday, enemy forces launched massive surprise attacks throughout South Vietnam. The offensive was quickly repulsed at great cost to the enemy, but the sudden show of enemy strength, combined with the shock the offensive engendered in the United States and around the world, proved a psychological victory for the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese. Public disenchantment in the United States with the war, which had grown steadily as the US combat involvement increased, reached new heights.



Tet Offensive begins in 1968.

President Johnson now decided on a major change in US policy. In late March 1968, he halted further large troop deployments to South Vietnam, limited the bombing of North Vietnam, and called for

negotiations to end the war. Further, to preclude his quest for peace from becoming involved in the forthcoming US presidential campaign, President Johnson decided not to seek reelection. Accordingly, the bombing of North Vietnam was restricted to the area below 20 degrees north and the United States and North Vietnam began talks in Paris in May. The talks quickly deadlocked on procedural matters, and in a further effort to stimulate meaningful negotiations, President Johnson suspended all bombing of North Vietnam on 31 October 1968, five days before the US presidential election. At that time, he also announced the expansion of the talks to include both the Republic of Vietnam and the National Liberation Front (NLF), the political arm of the Viet Cong.



“In Washington yesterday with a draft peace proposal.”

Richard Nixon assumed the presidency in January 1969 convinced that the United States must end its involvement in Vietnam. The ever spiraling expenditures required by the US presence there were needed for other programs and the American public no longer supported the war. The one question, and a major one, was how to withdraw from Vietnam without sacrificing South Vietnam to communist domination. President Nixon decided upon a two-faceted approach: the United States would proceed with negotiations in the hope of reaching a political agreement; failing that, the United States would rely on Vietnamization -- building up the South Vietnamese forces to assume the combat responsibility while gradually withdrawing US military forces.

(continued....)



Accompanying this policy decision came a slight, but subtle, change in the US objective in South Vietnam. No longer did the United States call for defeat of the Viet Cong-North Vietnamese aggression and attainment of a “stable non-communist government” in South Vietnam. Rather the United States now sought the “opportunity” for the South Vietnamese to determine their own political future from “outside interference.”

In implementation of this new policy, the United States proceeded with the Paris talks throughout 1969 and 1970 and made several secret initiatives as well, but North Vietnam showed little interest in a negotiated settlement. Consequently, the United States moved forward with Vietnamization. Improvement of the South Vietnamese forces was accelerated and, in July 1969 the United States began the first withdrawal of forces and had removed slightly more than 205,000 by the end of 1970.



1971 Vietnam War protest/march.

Now, at the beginning of 1971, the United States was well on the way to reducing its combat involvement in Vietnam. In the months ahead, the United States would undoubtedly proceed with the negotiations and, in the absence of a political agreement, would press on with improvement of the RVN forces while continuing its troop withdrawals. But despite the reduction of forces, the United States was no nearer to ending the fighting or achieving free choice for the people of South Vietnam to decide their own future than when the combat commitment was undertaken. The enemy was, apparently, willing and ready to carry on the war as long as necessary to achieve his goals. Obviously, something was needed to dissuade him from prolonging the fighting. One possibility was action to stem the continuing flow of supplies from North Vietnam. Since a return to the bombing of North Vietnam was unlikely for political reasons, there was the alternative of destroying the supplies as they moved through Lao and Cambodia. This had been the purpose of the US and RVN invasion of Cambodia during May and June 1970, and some sort of similar operation into Laos was a prospect in the coming months. //

The war begins for the 173d Yanks and their Digger buddies...

## U.S., AUSSIE TROOPS JOIN VIET CONG HUNT



“American helicopters leave the landing zone in the D zone, 30 miles north of Saigon, as paratroopers of the U.S. 173d Airborne Brigade move out through tall grass at the beginning of an operation against the Viet Cong. Australian and Republic of Vietnam troops also took part in the operation.” (AP Radiophoto)

SAIGON (UPI) – U.S. paratroopers and Australian infantrymen converged in a giant pincer movement in War Zone D, 30 miles north of Saigon.

They were working with two Republic of Vietnam battalions in an effort to trap a large guerrilla force which overran Dong Xoai two weeks ago.

As of early Wednesday, however, the guerrillas appeared to be successfully eluding the net and only light contact was being reported.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Bn. Royal Australian Regt., commanded by Lt. Col. I.R. Brumfield, was helilifted into the combat zone, south of Bien Hoa late Tuesday after being held in reserve for a day.

They occupy the right flank in the combined task force of more than 2,000 troops.

The offensive was launched Monday into the communist infested Viet Cong D Zone with a massive helilift by more than 120 U.S. Army choppers and 10 Vietnamese helicopters carrying elements of the 173d Airborne Brigade and Vietnamese paratroopers....

[Cover story & photo *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, Tue., July 1, 1965]





## ~ Reunions of the Airborne Kind ~



**“Parachutes Over Pittsburgh”, 2012 Convention,**  
August 8-11, 2012, Monroeville/Pittsburgh, PA.

**Contact:**

**Tommy Thompson, 724-206-0290**  
**Eml: [82paratrooper@comcast.net](mailto:82paratrooper@comcast.net)**



**101st Airborne Division Association 67th Annual Reunion,**  
August 14-17, 2012. Marriott Nashville Airport, Nashville, TN.

**Contact:**

**Phn: 931-431-0199**



**2nd International Paratrooper Reunion,** August 17-19, 2012, The Interessengemeinschaft Fallschirmjäger n.e. V, Leipziger Chaussee 111, Am Flugplatz, 39120 Magdeburg.

**Contact:**

**Eml: [http://www.paratroops-reunion.de/html/home\\_.html](http://www.paratroops-reunion.de/html/home_.html)**



**56th Annual Reunion of the 503rd Parachute Regimental Combat Team,** September 23 – 26, 2012. Holiday Inn, Richmond Intl. Airport, Sandston, VA.

**Contact:**

**Nancy Young, Secretary**  
**Eml: [youngncy@comcast.net](mailto:youngncy@comcast.net)**



**San Diego 173d Airborne Association, Dinner/Dance,**  
August 25, 2012, Escondito, CA. See Page 6 for more information.

**Contact:**

**Gilbert Reynoso, Chapter President**  
**Phn: 1-760-294-8741**  
**Cell: 1-760-500-1944**  
**E-mail: [g\\_reynoso\\_r@yahoo.com](mailto:g_reynoso_r@yahoo.com)**



**2012 FSB Ripcord Association Reunion,** October 3-6, 2012, Indianapolis Marriott East, Indianapolis, IN.

**Contact:**

**Web: [www.ripcordassociation.com](http://www.ripcordassociation.com)**



**173d Airborne Brigade Association Annual Reunion,**  
August 25-29, 2013, Las Vegas, NV. Watch this space for upcoming details. See Page 42.

### ~ Other Reunions ~



**29th Annual Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Reunion,** July 30 - August 5, 2012. Hilton Hotel, New Orleans, LA.

**Contact:**

**Phn: 800-505-8472**

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**Battle of the Bulge Veterans,** September 26-30, 2012. New Orleans, LA.

**Contact:**

**Doris Davis**

**Phn: 650-654-0101**

**Eml: [doris@battleofthebulge.org](mailto:doris@battleofthebulge.org)**  
**Web: <http://www.battleofthebulge.org/>**



**2012 Combat Infantryman's Reunion,** October 18-21, 2012. Nashville, TN.

**Contact:**

**Web: <http://cibassoc.com>**

**Note: If you're aware of any upcoming Airborne reunions please send details to: [rto173d@cfl.rr.com](mailto:rto173d@cfl.rr.com)**



1965 1966 1967 1968 1969 1970 1971 1972 1973 1974 1975

## ~ This Month in History ~

*"They were the best of times; they were the worst of times."*

### ~ August 1965 ~

**August:** Combined Action Platoons are formed by U.S. Marines utilizing South Vietnamese militia units to protect villages and conduct patrols to root out Viet Cong guerrillas.

**2<sup>nd</sup>:** Operation Frag Order ends for the 173d Airborne



Brigade. On 27 June, the brigade participated in the first joint U.S.-ARVN operation of the war. Nine battalions were involved in this mission which penetrated deep into the Western part of the Tan Uyen area of War Zone "D". Over 400 VC casualties resulted from this combined operation. This was the first major engagement between the VC and the 173d. The brigade destroyed a hard-core VC battalion.



August 1965

**2<sup>nd</sup>:** Reporter Morley Safer sends 1st Vietnam report indicating we are losing.

**3<sup>rd</sup>:** The destruction of suspected Viet Cong villages near Da Nang by a U.S. Marine rifle company is shown on CBS TV and generates controversy in America. Earlier, seven Marines had been killed nearby while searching for Viet Cong following a mortar attack against the air base at Da Nang.

**4<sup>th</sup>:** President Johnson asks Congress for an additional \$1.7 billion for the war.

**5<sup>th</sup>:** Viet Cong destroy two million gallons of fuel in storage tanks near Da Nang.

**6<sup>th</sup>:** Federal Voting Rights Act guarantees black voting rights.

**8<sup>th</sup>:** The U.S. conducts major air strikes against the Viet Cong.

**10<sup>th</sup> thru 5<sup>th</sup> Sep:** 173d Airborne conduct Operation Pleiku. The brigade loaded its men on C-130s and C-123s to relieve the siege of the Special Forces CIDG Camp at Du Co, about four kilometers from Cambodia. The 173d provided security in the Thanh Binh Pass by conducting many platoon and



company size sweeps of the area. Early September, the 1/503rd were ordered to Kontum. During this operation VC activity decreased to an 18 month low.

**11<sup>th</sup>:** Race riots (the Watts riots) begin in Watts area of Los Angeles, California.

**13<sup>th</sup>:** Ikeda Hayato, Prime Minister of Japan (b. 1899), dies.

**14<sup>th</sup>:** Beatles tape an appearance for the Ed Sullivan Show.

**14<sup>th</sup>:** Sonny and Cher's "I Got You Babe" hits #1.

**18<sup>th</sup>-24<sup>th</sup>:** Operation Starlite begins the first major U.S. ground operation in Vietnam as U.S. Marines wage a preemptive strike against 1500 Viet Cong planning to assault the American airfield at Chu Lai. The Marines arrive by helicopter and by sea following heavy artillery and air bombardment of Viet Cong positions. 45 Marines are killed and 120 wounded. Viet Cong suffer 614 dead and 9 taken prisoner. This decisive first victory gives a big boost to U.S. troop morale.

**19<sup>th</sup>:** Auschwitz trials end with 6 life sentences.



Auschwitz



Auschwitz

(continued....)





**20<sup>th</sup>:** Native American paramilitary officer, Lewis Ojibway, died along with four others as their helicopter crashed into the Mekong. Due to poor visibility, pilot Bob Nunez was flying using the river as a marker and flew too low. Ojibway's territory was near the Golden Triangle in Northwest Laos, the quietest location.



**U.S. Marines with captured Viet Cong in Van Toun.**

**21<sup>st</sup>:** Chu Lai, Vietnam. The U.S. Marines reported Thursday they had smashed a big Viet Cong concentration on the Van Tuong Peninsula, inflicting bloody losses on the communist forces. It was reported 552 VC killed, 1,000 VC wounded.

**31<sup>st</sup>:** President Johnson signs a law criminalizing draft card burning. Although it may result in a five year prison sentence and \$1000 fine, the burnings become common during anti-war rallies and often attract the attention of news media.

**“In a demonstration staged by the student-run National Coordinating Committee to End the War in Vietnam, the first public burning of a draft card in the United States takes place. These demonstrations drew 100,000 people in 40 cities across the country. In New York, David Miller, a young Catholic pacifist, became the first U.S. war protestor to burn his draft card in direct violation of a recently passed law forbidding such acts. Agents from the Federal Bureau of Investigation later arrested him; he was tried, found guilty, and sentenced to two years imprisonment.”**

## ~ August 1966 ~

**1<sup>st</sup>:** Ex Marine 25-year-old Charles Joseph Whitman shot and killed 15 people at the University of Texas before he was gunned down by police.

**3<sup>rd</sup> - Oct 27<sup>th</sup>:** Operation Prairie was a military operation in northern South Vietnam. Its job was to eliminate North Vietnamese Army forces south of the DMZ.



August 1966

**5<sup>th</sup>:** Martin Luther King, Jr. stoned during Chicago march.

**6<sup>th</sup>:** U.S. citizens demonstrate against war in Vietnam.

**6<sup>th</sup>:** Muhammad Ali KOs Brian London in 3 for heavyweight boxing title.

**7<sup>th</sup>:** Race riot in Lansing, Michigan.

**9<sup>th</sup>:** U.S. jets attack two South Vietnamese villages by mistake, killing 63 civilians and wounding over 100.

**10<sup>th</sup> thru 7<sup>th</sup> Sep:** 173d Airborne conduct Operation Toledo in Phuoc Tuy & Binh Tuy Provinces. The Sky Soldiers uncovered over 125,000 rounds of small arms ammunition, over 50 tons of rice, 10 base camps, 75 huts and 5 tunnel systems in the May Tao Secret Zone.



**10<sup>th</sup>:** First lunar orbiter launched by US.

**11<sup>th</sup>:** John Lennon apologizes at a Chicago news conference for saying the Beatles were *"more popular than Jesus."*

**16<sup>th</sup>:** Jack Mather, actor (Cisco Kid), dies of heart attack at 58.

**16<sup>th</sup>:** The House Un-American Activities Committee begins investigations of Americans who have aided the Viet Cong. The committee intends to introduce legislation making these activities illegal. Anti-war demonstrators disrupt the meeting and 50 people are arrested.

**18<sup>th</sup>:** The Battle at Long Tan occurs, when a patrol of Royal Australian Regiment encounter the Viet Cong.

**Long Tan, Vietnam. 19 August 1966. Private David J. Collins guards a captured Viet Cong found hiding on the battle field by Delta Company, 6RAR. (From Australian War Memorial)**

[See *The Battle at Long Tan* on Page 29]



**27<sup>th</sup>:** Sir Francis Chichester begins 1st solo ocean voyage around the world.

**27<sup>th</sup>:** Race riot in Waukegan, Illinois.

**30<sup>th</sup>:** Hanoi announces China will provide economic and technical assistance.

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