

HIST. COPY OF THE

FIRST BATTALION (AIRBORNE) TWENTIETH CAVALRY

1 July 1965 - 31 December 1965

Prepared by

Captain William C. Roll,

1/Lt. Jimmie R. Smith

and

1/Lt. Melvyn A. Estey, Jr.

Approved by

Rutland N. Beard, Jr.

Lt. Col. Infantry

Commanding

Headquarters

1st Battalion (Atn) 12th Cavalry

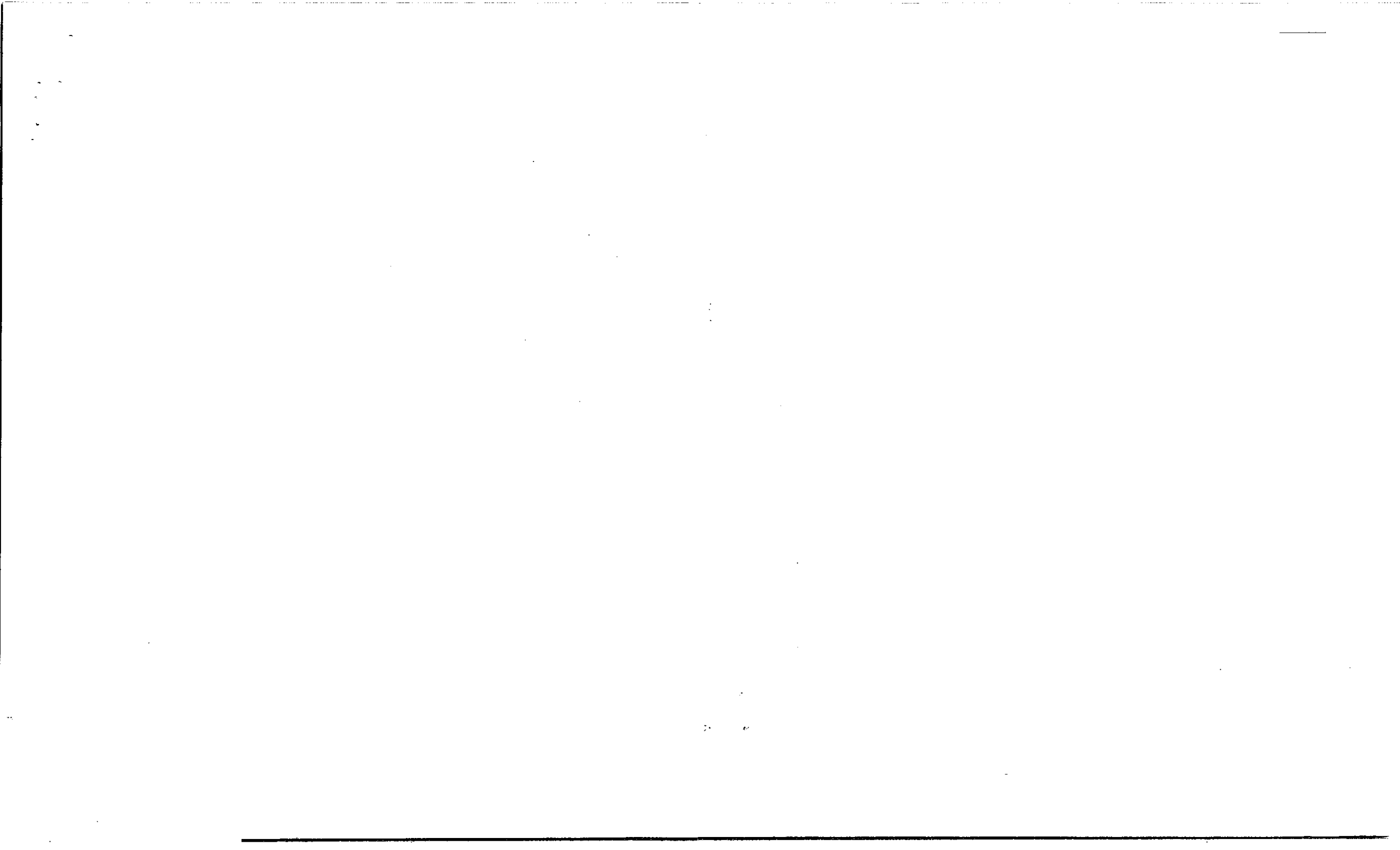
1st Cavalry Division (Aircraft)

APO San Francisco 96490



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#### CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY

On 1 July 1965, after twenty months of intense training and testing of the airmobile concept, the Department of Defense adopted a new type division. The colors of the famous and colorful 1st Cavalry Division returned to the United States (Fort Benning, Georgia) for the first time in twenty years. The division was redesignated the 1st Air Cavalry Division, the Army's first airmobile division, and a new chapter in military history was begun.

On 1 July 1965 another first was added to the Cavalry history when the 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry "Chargers" became the division's first airborne battalion with Lt. Col. Robert M. ~~McComaker~~ as the new "Chargers" first commander. The battalion staff headed by Major Joseph F. Bellochi as Executive Officer, consisted of Captain Jackie B. Cummings, S-1; Captain John Drake, S-2; Captain William C. Roll, S-3; and Captain Donald F. McMillan, S-4. The commanders of Headquarters, A, B, C, and D Company were Captain Michael W. Maxwell, Captain James L. Allen, Captain Stephen Klein, Captain Robert E. Lindquist, and Captain John G. Gergulis respectively.

The battalion's initial assignment was to emphasize all airmobile and airmobile techniques. Then as the entire 1st Brigade was designated airborne, the 1st Battalion (Airborne) 12th Cavalry was once again called upon to lead the way by augmenting the airborne school at Fort Benning with qualified NCO's to assist the brigade's two sister battalions through the three weeks of jump school.

On 28 July 1965, the President of the United States in a message to the nation alerted and ordered the 1st Air Cavalry Division to duty in the Republic of Viet Nam. During the period 29 July to 20 August, the battalion's departure date, all effort was devoted to guerrilla warfare training and preparation for the move. In addition to the guerrilla warfare training, the packing of conex containers, turning in of excess equipment, publishing items necessary for Viet Nam and completing processing overseas replacement requirements the battalion was given the task of training, zeroing, and record firing the entire division with the new XM16E-1 (M-16) rifle. This latter mission took three weeks to complete and was accomplished in the usual outstanding "Charger" way.

On 31 July 1965, the officers continued to keep the "Chargers" out in front by having the first Airborne Prop-Blast in the 1st Cavalry Division. It was held at the Country Club at Fort Benning and twenty-one officers were blasted. Continuing in the "Charger" spirit on 3 August the 1st Battalion (Airborne) 12th Cavalry, led by Lt. Col. Shoemaker, was the first to hit the silk on the initial jump of the 1st Airborne Brigade. The entire battalion made the jump and sustained no injuries. The morale and training status achieved by the unit was such that between 4 and 14 August the entire battalion, 50% at a time, was granted 5 days leave prior to going overseas. All personnel were present for duty on 15 August 1965.

The advance party, consisting of the Battalion Executive Officer, S-2, S-3 Training Officer, S-4, Company Executive Officers, and seven enlisted men, departed Fort Benning, Georgia by C-130 aircraft the morning of 17 August 1965 and arrived in Nha Trang, South Viet Nam on 21 August. On 25 August the advance

party flew to the site of the new division base camp at An Khe in the central highlands where it spent 30 grueling days breaking through the jungle to clear a suitable area for the remainder of the Division's men and aircraft.

While the advance party was clearing the area north of An Khe for the troops and helicopters soon to arrive, the remainder of the battalion boarded the USNS Geiger at Savannah, Georgia on 20 August 1965. The ship travelled through the Red Sea Canal making stops at Pearl Harbor and Guam before arriving at Qui Nhon on 20 September 1965.

The month aboard ship was not a vacation but a period of hard work for all. There was a daily training schedule which included physical training and classroom work. The classes had been prepared at Fort Benning three weeks prior to departure and the instructors had been rehearsed by their Commanding Officers. This month of Navy life will never be forgotten. Everyone will remember standing inchow line all day, the stop over in Hawaii, the man diving under the submarine and of course the seasickness experienced by many.

Twenty September 1965 found the USNS Geiger at the harbor of Qui Nhon. The troops were issued their TQ&E equipment and ammunition and lined up to off load onto LST's, for further movement to the Beach Company C, which had been given the honor of disembarking first by virtue of winning the majority of activities on organization day at Fort Benning, Texas during a heavy rain. The weather and darkness stopped the off loading of the remainder of the battalion for the day.

On 21 September all other companies completed off loading the ship, moved by trucks to the Qui Nhon airfield and loaded C-47 Chinook helicopters for the trip to An Khe. Troop arriving at the division heliport in a light rain, guides from the advance party led the troops to the new battalion area which was quickly named "Charger City".

As each unit moved into the next line area, the Company Executive Officers gave the troops a briefing and outlined the company areas. Completing this, the companies lined up by platoons and pitched shelter tents. These two-man tents were the only shelters available to the troops for the first two months in

Viet Nam.

From 22 September through 3 October the battalion had the dual mission of securing a portion of the division perimeter, the base of Hon Cong mountain, and constructing a semi-permanent battalion base. Throughout this period the routine was more the same each day. During the day the men worked on positions, rested and went on short recon patrols. At night the battalion remained on 100% alert and frequently received sniper fire. Trip mines and Claymore mines were placed out at dusk and recovered at dawn. The companies were rotated and the one which stayed at the base camp worked on its company's area as well as having the mission of being the brigade and division reaction force.

On the night of 22 September 1965, Companies F and G were in positions along the barrier line, and received hostile fire for the first time from soldiers of Hoa Con. No casualties were sustained but an entirely new section was experienced for the first time by many of the troops, two days later the battalion sent out the first patrols consisting of four men man recon teams, two each from Companies B and G. Inside primary mission was to locate any VC (Viet Cong) activity within 400 meters of the division perimeter, with a secondary mission of recording all trails, huts, and other signs of habitation in the area. There was no enemy contact although extensive cabling brass was found.



On 3 October, the battalion was relieved of the barrier line detail by a sister battalion and took over the responsibility of securing the division "picket line". The picket line consisted of 9 positions ranging from one to five miles from the base camp. During this period all the platoons of the battalion conducted recon patrols and short air assault operations during daylight hours and ambush patrols around the various positions at night. Upon being relieved from the picket line, the battalion was attached to the 3rd Brigade for an air assault search and destroy operation in Binh Dinh Province, 25 miles northeast of An Khe. This was the battalion's first combat operation and was given the code name "Shiney Bayonet".

On 10 October, the battalion was air lifted from An Khe Airfield to a landing zone in the Suoi La Tinh river valley using 54 UH-1D helicopters. Company A was the first company to land and secured the landing zone for the remainder of the battalion which closed at 1230. Sporadic sniper fire was received during and following the landing. At 1300 hours Company D sustained the first casualty of the battalion when PFC Terry T. Wright was shot in the chest by a sniper. The young trooper later died of his wounds after being evacuated by helicopter to a hospital in Qui Nhon.

The battalion continued to receive sniper fire from the hills surrounding the landing zone for the remainder of the day. At 1400 S/Sgt Harold M. Hambrick, a veteran of 24 years service, was killed by an enemy bullet. This was the battalion's first KIA (killed in action) in ground combat since the Korean War. The day ended with the battalion in a perimeter surrounding the landing zone.

On 11 October 1965, Company B was given the mission to search and clear a valley which ran north for two thousand meters and then turned west for

hours to set up blocking positions while the latter completed its consolidation. Darkness and foggy weather caused the two companies to pull back 1000 meters and form a perimeter for the night. At 2300 hours Companies A and B received fifteen 81 mm mortar rounds. Companies C and D conducted local patrol in the vicinity of the battalion command post and received sniper fire throughout the area. Nightfall found Company B with one KIA and two WIA's (wounded in action) while Company C received one WIA.

The hardest and heaviest engagement that the battalion encountered was fought on 12 October with Companies A and B fighting as a two company covering force against a VC battalion. It was in this critical setting that two men personified the spirit of the "Chargers" and kept the morale high. The Chaplain Captain Lord, heedless of his own safety ministered to the wounded, took charge of the evacuation of the wounded and carried many of the wounded to safety personally. At this point Major Bellocchi, Battalion Executive Officer, seeing that Medical Evacuation Helicopters were having difficulty evacuating casualties, repeatedly flew his helicopter through intensive small arms and automatic weapons fire to augment the Medical Evacuation Helicopters. In all he made five trips to bring out eight WIA's in an H-13, a one passenger helicopter. The Major and the Chaplain were subsequently awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and Silver Star respectively for their heroic exploits. The battle lasted until darkness, and the following day the valley was taken and the two companies were finally ordered back to the battalion command post after a search of the battle area. The remainder of the operation was spent destroying enemy huts and numerous rice stores.

On 14 October the battalion was air lifted back to the "Golf Course", the nickname for the huge heliport at An Khe's base camp. There were 54 aircraft used in the extraction and 32 of them were hit by sniper fire. The battalion's losses on "Shiney Bayonet" were seven KIA and sixty-four WIA. The enemy losses for the operation were 16 KIA by battalion weapons, and an estimated 26 KIA by artillery with 3 VCC's (Viet Cong captives) and 21 VCS's (Viet Cong suspects) captured. Even more important than the losses dealt to the enemy was the invaluable experience gained by the battalion in its first combat. Almost overnight green troops were turned into veteran combat soldiers.

Between 15 October and 25 October the battalion refitted, maintained equipment, and secured the An Khe airfield and the picket line. There was a rumor that the battalion might be able to have a non-tactical jump and everybody crossed their fingers hopefully. Finally on 26 October, 501 men from the battalion made their first and last parachute jump in Viet Nam, jumping from UH-1D helicopters. Shortly afterwards a directive from theater headquarters prohibited all proficiency and training parachute jumps because of a shortage of aircraft. Incentive pay was continued without the customary "pay jump".

On 27 October the battalion commenced operation "All the Way" with the 1st Brigade. The battalion was air lifted to Camp Holloway at Pleiku, Viet Nam. The next morning they moved out by UH-1D helicopters to landing zones near the Cambodian border to conduct search and destroy operations. The battalion stayed on this operation for eighteen days, searching and clearing areas from north of Highway 19 south to the Ia Dreng Valley between Plei Me and the border. The battalion engaged in a number of fire fights with elements of the North Vietnamese Regular Army and captured a large amount of weapons and equipment.

Enemy losses for the operation included 17 VC's and 42 VC's while this unit suffered 4 KIA's. The battalion was air lifted back to An Khê Airfield on 13 November. Upon return, Company B, with the battalion recon platoon attached, secured the airfield and bridges. Companies A and C went back to the barrier line.

During operation "All the Way", the battalion unexpectedly reaped some fruits of the civil affairs program. While maneuvering in the Duc Co area, D Company received the assistance of 20 members of a village just to the south of Duc Co. In anticipation of possible repercussions from the VC, both the Company Commander and the village Chief decided it would be best to evacuate the village. Captain Gergulis, the Company Commander, requested and received CH 47 helicopters for the evacuation. On 30 and 31 October D Company was able to evacuate approximately 520 refugees.

The very next day Company A, commanded by Captain Drake, received a request for evacuation from another village about 10 kilometers east of Duc Co. Again "Chinooks" were made available and A Company evacuated the village to Duc Co.

The battalion started its vigorous Civil Affairs Program with the arrival of Major Bellochi and the advance party. Our first project was to help the Catholic Orphanage in the village of An Khê. We made arrangements for them to do our laundry and started other money making projects for them.

After the arrival of the division and the setting up of areas of responsibilities, the 1st Brigade gave the 1st Battalion (Airborne) 12th Cavalry the civil affairs responsibility for the village of Son Tong. This civil affairs team was made up of the S-2 (who functioned also as Civil Affairs Officer), medics, and various attached personnel. The village is located 4 kilometers southwest of the division base camp. The battalion provided sick

call once a week and supplemented this with weekly Basic First Aid and Basic Nursing class. Although sick call and classes were held only while the battalion was in base camp they were well attended and over six weeks of classes were given to a group of Vietnamese women.

The civil affairs program, as per the operation near Duc Co, was by no means limited to base camp. When ever possible in the field, the S-2 would attach a Psychological War group to the Civil Affairs Team and provide medical aid for friendly villages in the vicinity.

On 21 November Company B was relieved at the airfield and bridges and returned to the base camp. There they were given the mission of securing five positions west of An Khe along Highway 19. By 0900 Company B and the recon platoon were in the new positions. As well as keeping the highway open, the platoons were given short air assault search and clear operations north and south of the highway. They were relieved of the highway mission on 30 November and returned to the base camp. During the same period Companies A and C secured the battalion's portion of the barrier line. The barrier had been improved and the two companies were occupying their sectors with three platoons. This development led to a rotation plan for the platoons, allowing one platoon to be back at the base camp at all times improving the battalion area.

On 22 November the battalion received its first new replacements. They were badly needed as the battalion had lost 1/5th of the personnel who had arrived with the unit in Viet Nam. The majority of the losses, approximately 140 to this date, were due to malaria. The seriousness of the malaria situation can be seen in the fact that the average malaria case required evacuation and hospitalization for a period of six weeks.

The battalion was relieved of the barrier line mission on 5 December and upon closing at the base camp used the remainder of the day to prepare for a four day battalion operation to be conducted within the division tactical area of responsibility. Commencing 6 December, the battalion was air lifted to an area eight miles southeast of An Khe for a search and kill operation. The area was heavily vegetated which made movement very slow and supply difficult. Company C was the only unit to make any contact and they received one MIA from a clash with an estimated three VC. There were no known enemy losses. The battalion was lifted back to the base camp on 10 December with the companies using power saws to clear the heavy vegetation from their pick-up zones.

Upon returning to the base camp Companies B, C, and D shared the barrier line while Company A took the responsibility of the An Khe Airfield and the bridges. Between 10 December and 29 December, the battalion rotated the companies on the barrier line and the airfield security missions. This gave the personnel a chance to rest, relax, and have time to take care of personal equipment and problems.

During this period there were many highlights for the battalion. On 11 December 1965 the battalion celebrated a homecoming for a new commander, Lt. Col. Rutland D. Beard, Jr., who assumed command from Lt. Col. Shoemaker who in turn became the commander of the 1st Battalion 24th Cavalry, Lt. Col. Beard, who had been the Battalion's Executive Officer for two years before moving to the office of the Chief of Staff, had returned as the number one "Charger".

The battalion planned and gave a Christmas party for the children of the Son Tong Village on 25 December. Sgt. Bill Cato, a medic, was dressed in full Santa Claus uniform and arrived by H-13 helicopter. Santa and some of his

helpers distributed 350 gifts to the children and taught them games. Some Vietnamese nurses trained by the battalion medical platoon served refreshments which were prepared in the battalion mess hall.

Christmas day 1965 found the 1st Battalion (Airborne) 12th Cavalry manning their barrier positions; but the posture of the battalion did not keep the day from being a good one. Chaplain Bill Lord held eleven religious services in the battalion parachute canopy chapel. The mess section in turn prepared a truly outstanding Christmas dinner with the traditional turkey and trimming.

The Christmas spirit was still around on the 27th as the troops were reading hundreds of Christmas cards and opening packages sent from the US, and then the word came that the Bob Hope Show consisting of the comedian, several pretty young girls, and a band, was to be that day. Only a small portion of the battalion personnel could get off the positions to see the show, but afterward those who did see it gave a first class review to the others.

The battalion was relieved of the responsibility of the airfield and barrier line on 29 December in order to prepare for a forthcoming brigade operation. During the month of December, the battalion was awarded the Infantry Combat Streamer by Division General Order #299. Approximately 95% of the battalion had been awarded the Combat Infantryman's Badge when the streamer was presented.

One group, not yet mentioned, which did much to raise the morale of the troops was the rear detachment construction team under the supervision of Sgt Major Lubiszewski. The Sgt. Major, under the direction of the Battalion Commandant, set up "Shoemaker's Water Works",

The water works started with an eight point shower which was one of the first in the division. This shower was immediately followed up by a running

water system. This system consisted of a 300 gallon water bladder which was gravity fed through pipes to six faucets. The running water which supplied the needs of the companies and the battalion mess hall was the first system of this type in the division. In addition to this, cement wash racks and an enclosed sewage system were completed for the mess halls.

Running concurrently with the "Water Works" was the Sgt. Major's construction of a permanent mess hall. Even though cement was difficult to obtain it was decided to construct the mess hall from cement. The Sgt. Major proved up to the task in both procuring and supervising the construction. The mess hall which was among the first constructed still remains as one of the few concrete structures in the division.

When the plans for the 1st Cavalry's base camp became official, the battalions were notified that the engineers would build all battalion mess halls. The battalion then decided to turn the construction into an Enlisted Men's Club. Even at this time the concrete structure was used as a club during the evening hours.

After the decision on the Enlisted Men's Club, the officers drew up plans for a rustic cabin structure to be set halfway up on a hill on a rock mass which overlooked the battalion and half of the An Khe base camp. The NCOs at the same time learned that the brigade was to build a NCO Club within 100 meters of the battalion area and thus decided to join the brigade charter.

The year 1965 was a memorable year for the "Chargers". From their activation on 1 July, through their movement to Viet Nam, their baptism of fire, and weeks of combat operations, to their barrier line duty, there was never a dull moment. The battalion faced and accomplished all missions assigned and are prepared to undertake the new year in the Airborne spirit of "ALL THE WAY".



KEY PERSONNEL

Lt Col Robert M. Shoemaker	CO until 11 December 1965
Lt Col Rutland D. Beard, Jr.	Assumed Command 11 December 1965
Maj Joseph F. Bellochi	XO until 27 December 1965
Maj Otto L. Centrall, Jr.	XO after 27 December 1965
Capt Jackie B. Cummings	S-1
Capt John E. Drake	CO, Co A; S-2
Capt Cyrus R. Steimart	S-2
Capt William G. Roli	S-3
Capt Donald F. McMillan	S-4, CO, Co C
Capt Michael W. Maxwell	CO, Hqs Co
Capt James L. Allen	CO, A Co
Capt Stephen Klein	CO, B Co
Capt Robert E. Hindquist	CO, C Co
Capt John G. Gargulis	CO, D Co; S-4
Capt Donald F. Warren	CO, D Co
Capt John F. Castro	S-5 Air
Capt Ted A. Showalter	Comm Officer
Capt Billy Ford	Ba Chaplain
Capt Harry D. Heilman	Bn Surgeon
Ltlt George Quigley	INO, Plat LDR Co B
Ltlt Oliver S. Jackson	LFO
Ltlt Nancy N. Dyard	XO, A Co
Ltlt William F. Barnett	Plat LDR, Co A
Ltlt Donald B. Adausen	Plat LDR, Co A

1/Lt	Robert L. Peel	PLAT LDR Co B
2/Lt	Marquette W. Burton	PLAT LDR Co A
1/Lt	Glen B. Buswell	PLAT LDR Co B
2/Lt	Roger V. Baker	PLAT LDR Co B
2/Lt	Ronald B. Epstein	PLAT LDR Co B
2/Lt	Daniel J. Kapica	PLAT LDR Co B
1/Lt	Wayne C. Davis	XO, Co C, LHO
1/Lt	Michael T. Chase	PLAT LDR, XO Co C
2/Lt	Robert McClellan	PLAT LDR, Co C
2/Lt	Fred H. Simon	PLAT LDR, Co C
2/Lt	Donald Kell	PLAT LDR, Co C
2/Lt	Joseph H. Snyder	PLAT LDR, Co C
1/Lt	Sarnel J. Watson III	XO Co D
1/Lt	Harry V. Smith	PLAT LDR, Co B, XO
1/Lt	Robert D. Sturdivant	PLAT LDR, XO, Co D
2/Lt	Arthur L. West III	PLAT LDR, Co D
1/Lt	Roger Carpenter	PLAT LDR, Co D
1/Lt	Roger N. Connor	PLAT LDR, S/T
1/Lt	Maryn A. Erney, Jr.	Med PLAT LDR
CWO	George P. Callahan	Property Book Officer
S/Maj	Walter Lubiszewski	Dr S/Maj
1st Sgt	Alfred A. Daniels	1st Sgt Hqs Co
1st Sgt	William H. Colbert	1st Sgt A Co

1st Sgt	Clarence Linton	1st Lt B Co
1st Sgt	William C. Staton	1st Sgt C Co
1st Sgt	William M. Tucker	1st Sgt D Co
M/Sgt	Richard E. Sandlin	Operations Sgt
M/Sgt	Leroy Mims, Jr.	Intelligence Sgt

**ATTACHED PERSONNEL:**

Capt Robert D. Offer, Jr.	F S C
Capt William P. Crum	(U S A F) F A C
1/Lt Jackie B Woods	F O Co B
2/Lt Larry Hunter	F O Co A
2/Lt Henry Simpson	F O Co C

STATISTICS

The first one hundred and eighty-four days:

Killed in Action: . . . . . 14  
Wounded in Action: . . . . . 85  
Malaria: . . . . . 163

AWARDS

Silver Star: . . . . . 4  
Bronze Star with V device: . . . . . 25  
Distinguished Flying Cross: . . . . . 1  
Air Medal: . . . . . 2  
Army Commendation Medal with V device: . . . 9  
Purple Heart: . . . . . 99  
Combat Infantryman's Badge: . . . . . 796  
Combat Medical Badge: . . . . . 27



Army Commendation Medal with V device

BARDINE, W. K.  
WARR, J. P.  
TUNNEY, M.  
HEIKAN, J.  
MILLER, H. P.  
ROBERTSON, R.  
RANNEY, F.  
STADLER, D. E.

1/It  
Psgt  
SGT E-5  
SP/4  
SP/4  
SP/4  
Pfc  
Pfc