

Red Warriors Ride Warpath To Red Bunkers

HIGHLANDER HEIGHTS (USA) — A Red Warrior rendezvous and day-long firefight led to the discovery and methodical, day-by-day destruction of more than 300 North Vietnamese Army bunkers scattered along a series of low ridgelines and dried creek beds 15 miles south of Kontum City recently.

The operation was initiated by men of Delta Company, 1st Battalion, 12th Infantry, 4th Infantry Division as they traveled through the jungle to-join forces with Company C.

Shortly before noon the point element from Company D spotted a small NVA patrol moving through a ravine toward a bunker. Immediately, First Lieutenant Larry Boyd, company commander, instructed his 2nd platoon to investigate the enemy position.

Drawing AK-47 and B-40 fire, the Red Warriors returned a heavy volume of firepower while setting up a company perimeter.

"From the perimeter we saw a group of NVA running across our field of fire near the ra-

vine," said Boyd. "We opened up on them.

"There was rifle and rocket fire coming into our front and then, suddenly, it changed and began hitting us on our right flank. We had artillery, gunships and air strikes cover the area around us but we continued to receive small arms fire. An hour later, 82mm mortar rounds began to strike near our perimeter," the lieutenant continued.

"An NVA soldier tried to

reach our perimeter approximately 25 meters from us," said Sergeant Del Bibbes. "My machine gunner killed him with a burst from his 60."

As the firefight raged on the jungle floor, Company C moved swiftly toward the rendezvous and the enemy.

"My squad formed the point element as we neared a rice paddy," said Sergeant Greg Steele. "We crossed it as fast as we could and started up the bank on the opposite side. Ap-

proximately 25 of us made it across when a B-40 exploded above our heads. It came from the trees above the bank and was followed by AK-47 fire. We hit the ground and began firing back."

Leaves fluttered to the ground and branches splintered as the Red Warriors administered a lethal dose of lead to the NVA who were now being hit from two sides.

"We surprised them while they were in contact with Delta

Company," said C Company platoon sergeant David Haines.

Night began to close over the battle and Charlie Company swept around the enemy location to join with Delta.

For the rest of the night artillery pounded the battleground. The following morning, Company C swept through the contact area.

For the next 10 days, Company C, assisted by elements of the 4th Engineers and commanded by Captain Darrel Skubimba, tore a road through the forest, locating and demolishing an endless stream of enemy bunkers.

The first complex consisted of 15 fighter-sleeper combinations forming a single triangle of five bunkers per side. Projecting from the set-up was a ridgeline topped by 18 bunkers arranged in three tiny perimeters.

Treading east and followed by two powerful bulldozers from the 4th Engineers and a tank, the Red Warriors added another 40 bunkers to their toll. These were arranged with fighting positions located on a ridgeline and tiny sleepers scooped out of the bank at the edge of a dried blue line, making them nearly invulnerable to artillery. The engineers quickly destroyed them.

Two kitchens and a living quarters equipped with crude bamboo desks and chairs were also destroyed.

Four hundred meters east, another 85 fighter-sleeper combinations were found forming two perimeters joined by a ridgeline. In one of these the bodies of two NVA soldiers dressed in green uniforms were found.

Close by, another complex of 60 bunkers was uncovered. Nearly all were freshly built with two to four feet of overhead cover. Interlacing them were numerous trails.



NEITHER RAIN NOR SNOW—Soldiers of the 2nd Battalion (Mechanized), 47th Infantry, 9th Infantry Division continue operations during the Delta monsoon.

(USA PHOTO By: Sgt. Lowell Kenney)