

AN HISTORICAL SUMMARY

THIRD BRIGADE
FOURTH INFANTRY DIVISION

Republic of Vietnam
January 1966 - January 1970

The following summary is a general
historical survey of actions invol-
ving the 4th Division's 3rd Brigade
since the brigade's arrival in Vietnam.

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HISTORICAL SURVEY - 3D BRIGADE, 4TH INFANTRY DIVISION - VIETNAM

A week before Christmas 1965, a squadron of U.S. Air Force transports took off in early morning from Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii loaded with men and equipment of the 3rd Brigade Task Force, 25th Infantry Division on a nonstop flight from Hawaii to the Central Highlands of Vietnam. The men on board were members of an "advanced planning group," dispatched to Vietnam to pave the way for movement of the "Tropic Lightning's" 3,000-man 3rd Brigade to Pleiku in early January, 1966.

Code-named Operation "Blue Light," the deployment by sea and air involved moving the brigade Command Group, its Headquarters and Headquarters Company, three infantry battalions, a support battalion and a tank company. Two of the infantry battalions---the 1st Battalion, 35th Infantry and 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry---along with the support battalion were airlifted to the newly-constructed Pleiku Airfield by continuous sorties of Air Force C141s, C130s, and C133 aircraft. Meanwhile, the brigade's 1st Battalion, 14th Infantry and Company B, 1st Battalion, 69th Armor and miscellaneous bulk cargo were moved to Vietnam via the troop ship USNS General Walker.

Weeks before the move began, 25th Division troops had engaged in the last of a three-year-long series of jungle warfare training exercises on the island of Oahu. The final exercise, dubbed the "Holokai Exercises," were held at the Army's Jungle Warfare Training Center on the eastern

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sections of the island. They were run under the supervision of the 1st Battalion, 35th Infantry and were designed to "teach individuals and units the techniques and skills required to sustain combat operations in jungle and mountainous terrain" such as that found in Vietnam.

Troops boarding aircraft at Hickam or going aboard the General Walker were not told that they were no longer involved in "just another training mission." It was only when they were airborne or well out to sea that they learned they were bound for Vietnam.

In the case of the "Golden Dragons" of the 1/14, the soldiers were hustled out of their barracks in the Quad E section of Schofield Barracks shortly before 10 p.m. in full combat gear, on the night of January 3, 1966. They were put aboard busses and taken to Honolulu's Pier 39 where they boarded the General Walker. As dawn broke over the islands on the 4th of January, the General Walker weighed anchor and slipped out of Honolulu Harbor on a due westerly course.

"Hey man maybe this Holokai 12 was for real," said one soldier as the ship got underway.

"Hell no dad," replied another, "we will be turning around and going back. You know Uncle Sam, he tries to be realistic as hell with these big alerts."

The voyage to Vietnam took two weeks. During that time life aboard the General Walker was by general consensus "lousy." Numerous

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areas of the big ship were "off limits" to the troops and the mess hall was run on a 24-hour basis, necessitating three shifts of kitchen police (KPs). Long lines for the mess hall were common and living conditions amongst both the battalion's officers and men were crowded.

On January 6, the General Walker crossed the International Dateline causing one trooper to ask a buddy:

"I thought you said this was just going to be a training mission?"

"No sweat," the buddy replied, "you know 'Sam is just trying to shake us up; you know, like realism---I think."

Brushup classes on combat subjects were held as the General Walker neared Vietnam and there was little doubt among the troops that they were indeed bound for Vietnam.

"Hey man you know that Uncle Sam, he ain't kidding," said one staff sergeant as the ship drew to within 429 miles of the Vietnamese coast. Other soldiers, however, continued to be optimistic.

"No sweat dad," one commented, "we got 429 miles to go and you know what's there; it's Hawaii man. We're going in on the back side of the island. They can't fool me."

At 9:50 a.m. on 16 January 1966 the General Walker dropped anchor in Cam Ranh Bay. The soldiers were put ashore and then airlifted via C130 Hercules transports to Pleiku where they joined their sister

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battalions in setting up a base camp on what is now known as "Engineer Hill" on the northeastern outskirts of Fleiku City. The brigade battalions spent the remainder of the month getting settled and preparing to launch combat operations.

The logistics of the brigade's move to Vietnam were noteworthy. The airlift bringing the brigade to Fleiku was the largest air movement ever made by the 25th Infantry Division. Aircraft involved in the move flew more than 240 missions, carrying 3,150 troops to Fleiku and at the same time moving more than 4,600 tons of cargo more than 3.3 million miles. Ships, which took part in the brigade move, were the USS Linfield Victory, USNS General Walker and the USNS Comet.

The terrain the "None Better" soldiers of the 3rd Brigade had inherited was tough. The area varied greatly throughout the brigade's area of operations from flat, open areas to dense, multi-canopy forests in mountainous terrain. Land south of Highway 19 running from Fleiku through the Mang Yang Mountains to Qui Nhon, was open and in most cases fairly level. Vegetation in the area was sparse, consisting of scattered trees and brushwood. In stream beds vegetation was moderately thick with small trees and some bamboo and elephant grass. During the four-month-long monsoon season from June to September, streams were swollen and deep with strong currents. The entire area was criss-crossed with streams and rivers, the largest being the Ia Drang and Ia Tach rivers.

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Extremely mountainous areas were found by the troops northwest of Fleiku in the Chu Go, Chu Trong and Chu Fa mountains. The highest peak in the Chu Fa range was 1,485 meters in altitude. The mountains are composed of steep slopes with vertical rock cliffs and numerous rock cave complexes. The vegetation in the area consists of double and triple canopy jungle of large teak and mahogany trees.

Weather in the area ranges from the almost daily downpours of the summer monsoon season to the dry, windy days of the fall and winter. Temperatures in the highlands push into the upper '90s during the summer. During winter, however, temperatures hover in the mid-80s during the day and dip into the low 50s at night. During the entire winter-dry period, a gusty wind blows out of the northwest, kicking up clouds of umbered dust, which settle over anything exposed like a fine red talcum.

Troops setting up firebases near Fleiku found that there was practically no potable water available in the Central Highlands. The only water available was rain water. Troops took showers in the rain. Electricity was also a problem with soldiers having to use candles to provide light after dark. Electricity generated by portable gasoline-powered generators was usually restricted to operations centers and headquarters areas.

On 22 January General William C. Westmoreland, then commander in chief of U.S. Army Vietnam, visited brigade areas and spoke to base camp formations of the 1/14, telling the men they had been sent to Vietnam to help the Vietnamese people win their freedom. He said the war would

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be a long war and told them: "Work like hell...and fight like Tigers!"

In less than two weeks the brigade was doing just that.

OPERATIONS THROUGH TET 1968

The 3rd Brigade began tactical operations on February 5, 1966 by taking part in Operation "Taylor," which lasted only three days. Involving units from the 1/14 and 2/35 Infantry, the brigade was air-assaulted to forward areas from Pleiku to conduct search and destroy operations. During those three days, brigade units operated northwest of Plei Mrong, 11 miles northwest of Pleiku City, and it was a reconnaissance platoon of the 2/35 which tallied the brigade's first enemy kills of the war when they clashed with ten North Vietnamese regulars in a fire fight.

Later in the month, the brigade took part in Operation "Garfield" and was deployed from Pleiku to Ban Me Thuot East via C130 aircraft. At Ban Me Thuot, they set up a command post and conducted search and destroy operations north of the city. Brigade soldiers killed 121 of the enemy during "Garfield" and captured 18 more while confiscating large amounts of enemy weaponry and other equipment.

In mid-March, the brigade went into the infamous Ia Drang River Valley

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in Operation "Lincoln" to prevent enemy forces from withdrawing or reinforcing the area and to conduct reconnaissance in force sweeps. The brigade units were also to provide security for selected ground lines of communication.

In April, the brigade moved to Kontum Province in Operation "Longfellow" to conduct search and destroy operations in conjunction with American engineer efforts to repair and improve Highway 14, running between Pleiku and Kontum. For both operations "Garfield" and "Longfellow", brigade elements made sparse contact with enemy units, killing a total of 32 enemy soldiers and capturing seven. Troops did, however, uncover more than 90 tons of rice, which had been stored in elevated bamboo structures built by enemy elements.

On 10 May 1966, the brigade became part of what was eventually to become one of the largest series of operations conducted by American troops in the Vietnam War---Operation "Paul Revere."

In each of the four operations to follow a newly-devised system of leapfrogging or checkerboarding troops from one area of operation to another was employed without a set pattern. Initially, infantry battalion task forces were used in search and destroy operations to insure that areas east of the Cambodian border were free of large enemy concentrations.

The 3rd Brigade set up its operations at the "Oasis," a landing zone southwest of Pleiku, which was to become the brigade's on again, off again home for the next four years.

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During "Paul Revere I," the brigade's efforts were oriented toward searching rear areas to insure that they were free of large enemy concentrations, while troops of the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), 2nd Brigade pushed into enemy encampments west of Plei D'Jereng and Duc Co.

When the operation ended in late July 1966, more than 546 enemy troops had been killed and 99 captured by 3rd Brigade troops.

On 1 August 1966 the 3rd Brigade came under the operational control of the 1st Air Cavalry Division as "Paul Revere II" got underway. Working as a unit in Task Force "Walker," the brigade clashed frequently with enemy troops in the western highlands. It was during Paul Revere II that human wave attacks by battalions of North Vietnamese and Viet Cong troops became a chilling reality. The attacks proved, however, to be sources of overwhelming American victories. When the operation ended August 25th, more than 379 enemy regulars had died, 15 more had been captured and large arsenals of Communist weapons and explosives had been confiscated by troops of the 3rd Brigade.

"Paul Revere III" was almost exclusively devoted to surveillance of the Cambodian border and securing portions of Highway 19 east from Pleiku to the Mang Yang Pass area, where the French Group Mobile 100 was virtually annihilated at the hands of Viet Minh guerillas during the Indochinese War 13 years earlier.

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Deployed into Kontum Province in mid-October, the 3rd Brigade teamed up with the "Highlanders" of the 2nd Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, newly arrived in country, to take part in the five-phased Operation "Paul Revere IV."

Raids by Air Force B52 bombers in the Chu Pa and Chu Prong Mountains had unearthed suspected base camp areas of four North Vietnamese regiments. Intelligence reports said the 32nd, 33rd, 88th and 95B NVA regiments were holed up in the mountains west of the muddy Se-San River. The 2nd and 3rd Brigades along with elements of the 1st Air Cavalry went into the mountains and in two and a half months killed more than 878 NVA and captured 78.

While fighting the enemy the brigade also engaged in civic action programs aimed at helping Vietnamese and Montagnard villagers establish self-help programs. Dozens of villagers were visited by brigade civic action teams and programs were set up in the villages to teach the Montagnards fundamentals of first aid, construction and acquaint them with the latest agricultural techniques. It was during this period that the resettlement village of Edap Enang was built to eliminate a source of forced labor for NVA units. Bands of enemy soldiers had been going into various Montagnard villages and forcing unarmed tribesmen to work for them, gathering food and helping the NVA build their jungle base camp areas. The resettlement was also aimed at providing security and various benefits to the Montagnards while giving allied forces operating in the area new "free fire" zones.

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On 3 January 1967, the 3rd Brigade was airlifted to Landing Zone Bronco, six miles southwest of Phu My in Binh Dinh Province, where it became attached to the 1st Air Cavalry in Operation "Thayer II." On February 11th, the brigade moved to Landing Zone Uplift, five miles north of Phu My to participate in Operation "Pershing." During the 11 weeks of "Pershing," brigade units conducted sweeps in the rugged hill mass known as Nui Mieu, lying east of Uplift and about midway between Highway 1 and the South China seacoast. During this period emphasis was placed on joint US-ARVN operations. Fifteen coordinated search and destroy operations were conducted with the 40th and 41st ARVN Regiments.

The brigade remained attached to the Cav until April 20th when it was deployed 40 miles to the northwest to Duc Pho in Quang Ngai Province where it became part of Task Force "Oregon" under the operational control of I Field Force (IFFV) Headquarters.

Operation "Baker" was the general code name for brigade operations in Quang Ngai. Working out of Landing Zone Baldy in southern I Corps, the brigade clashed in vicious, close-in fighting, with the 2nd Viet Cong and 22nd NVA regiments, of the 3rd NVA Division; 1st VC Regiment of the 2nd NVA Division; 38th and 19th Local Force Battalions; Mo Duc and Duc Pho local force companies, and village and hamlet guerrillas. The battling lasted from 22 April to 20 August 1967.

As part of Task Force "Oregon," the brigade was responsible for protecting the Duc Pho and Mo Duc districts of Quang Ngai Province.

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The thickly-jungled area was a well-established stronghold for VC and NVA units. District officials estimated at the time that more than 80 per cent of the population was Communist or Communist sympathizers. Enemy forces were well equipped with machine guns, rockets, mortars and automatic weapons. The brigade's only two infantry battalions blasted their ways into Red sanctuaries in eye-to-eye battles, which left more than 3,000 enemy dead and another 310 captured. An 18 to 1 enemy to friendly loss ratio was established by the "Bronco Brigade" soldiers, which later led to a Presidential Unit Citation nomination for their work.

It was during operations in the Duc Tho area that the brigade's second Medal of Honor winner, Staff Sergeant Kenneth E. Stumpf, of Mensasha, Wis., cut a place in history for himself. The brigade's first Medal of Honor during the Vietnam conflict was awarded in 1967, posthumously, to Captain Joseph Grant for heroic action while serving with Company A, 1st Battalion, 14th Infantry during 1966.

Sergeant Stumpf was a squad leader with Company C, 1st Battalion, 35th Infantry on the morning of 15 July 1967. As Company C hacked its way through dense jungles nine miles southwest of Duc Tho in energy-sapping 105 degree temperatures, they ran headlong into an NVA rifle company entrenched in a well-fortified bunker complex. The enemy allowed the company's point elements to come to within 10 yards of their positions before opening fire. During the first few minutes of fighting, three of Stumpf's men fell wounded directly in front of the machine gun.

"The fire was so intense that no one could move," remembered Platoon Sergeant Jack H. Jasper, "if he did he was hit."

Despite the enemy fire, Stumpf twice dashed through a "hail of lead" to rescue the wounded men. Later, Stumpf armed himself with grenades and ran toward a machine gun position. Reaching it, he hurled a grenade through its aperture, but enemy soldiers inside threw it back. Stumpf then pulled the pins on two more grenades, held them for a few seconds, and tossed them into the bunker, demolishing the emplacement. The "Fighting Gypsies" then assaulted the remaining bunkers in a "screaming frenzy" and overran the positions.

Stumpf was presented with the Medal of Honor for his efforts by President Lyndon B. Johnson in ceremonies at the White House on 19 September, 1968.

In colorful ceremonies at Da Nang on August 1, 1967 the 3d Brigade, 25th Infantry Division became the 3rd Brigade, 4th Infantry Division. The two brigades swapped colors to alleviate administrative problems, which had arisen by having the "Tropic Lightning's" 3rd Brigade more than 200 miles from its parent unit, which had established its headquarters at Cu Chi, northwest of Saigon.

The 4th Division's 3rd Brigade, meanwhile, had come ashore at Vung Tau in October, 1966 and was placed under the operational control of the 25th Division. The brigade conducted operations in the VC-infested marshlands north and northwest of the capital city in the Hung Sat Zone, participating in Operations Junction City, Gasden, Bremerton, Manhattan and Cedar Falls.

During September 1966, ground work for the formation of the Americal Division was completed and on 1 October Task Force "Oregon" was dissolved and the Americal Division activated. The Ivy brigade was placed under the operational control of the Americal during the remainder of Operation "Baker," which continued through the end of the year.

When Vietnam erupted into a massive battle field on the night of 30 January 1968, brigade soldiers held off vicious NVA and VC attacks on coastal highland cities south of Da Nang. In a February 6th attack on Hoi An, troops of the 1/35 beat back a ground attack by elements of the 3rd NVA Regiment, killing 103 enemy soldiers. Two days later other brigade elements, operating in Task Force "Miracle," north of the Song Thu Bon River, clashed with the 1st NVA Regiment, killing 266 more North Vietnamese. The following day, 9 February 1968, elements of the 1/14 and 1/35 Infantry in separate contacts with the 2nd NVA Division and 21st NVA Regiment killed 236 NVA and captured or destroyed more than 100 small arms and crew-served weapons.

Brigade operations during Tet were code named Operation "Wheeler/Wallowa" and succeeded in driving the entire 2nd NVA Division from the coastal plains and jungles near Chu Lai, Da Nang and Duc Pho.

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OPERATIONS FOLLOWING TLT 1968

The 3rd Brigade remained in the Duc Pho area until the end of February when it moved to Landing Zone English in Binh Dinh Province and came under the operational control again of IFFV. At LZ English, the brigade was reunited with its parent unit on the last day of March. For the first time since its arrival in country, the 4th Division had all three brigades intact.

In early April, 1968 after enemy attempts to capture major cities and land areas had apparently failed and battle action had calmed down, the brigade swapped areas of operation with the 173rd Airborne Brigade, which had fought alongside the 4th Division's 1st and 2nd Brigades in the battles of Dak To in early February, killing an estimated 3,000 enemy soldiers.

Working as one, the reunited division continued Operation "MacArthur," begun in mid-October, 1967, aimed at clearing enemy units from the 8,000 square miles of Pleiku, Kontum and Darlac provinces. The 3rd Brigade was headquartered near Kontum.

Through May and June, 1968, the 1st and 3rd Brigades operating part of the time with the 3rd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, completely stymied repeated NVA attempts to drive towards Kontum, Dak To and Special Forces camps stretching along the Cambodian border. More than 5,000 of the enemy fell before "Ivy" guns in "MacArthur" with 3rd Brigade troops capturing tons of enemy food and other equipment.

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Operation "MacArthur" continued largely uneventful and quiet through the summer and fall of 1968, but as the new year rolled around action picked up considerably. On 5 January, 1969 intelligence reports again showed that the 1st NVA Division had moved into the Chu Ia mountains west of Plei Mrong. Air Force B52 raids pummeled the area daily, but they failed to jar the enemy from his mountain-side entrenchments. Elements of the K4, K6 and K31 Battalions, 24th and 66th NVA regiments and 40th Artillery Regiment were holed up on the mountain.

Code-named Operation "Sledge Hammer," the move to clear the Chu Ia took two months of difficult fighting for brigade soldiers. A total of seven American and two ARVN Infantry battalions were committed to the fight. According to the battle plan, rangers from the ARVN 24th Special Tactical Zone set up blocking forces to the south of the mountain, while American infantrymen combat assaulted onto the mountain and attempted to drive the enemy forces from their strongholds and trap them against the blocking forces. Weeks were spent "cleaning up" the mountain.

Operation "MacArthur" ended with the Chu Ia operation and proved to be the most sustained battle operation launched by the 4th Division. An estimated 500 enemy soldiers died in the battles which resulted in the securing of Pleiku, Kontum and Darlac provinces from enemy intrusion.

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In early March, 1969, the 3rd Brigade became part of Operation "Hines," in which it continued to battle NVA and VC forces in Ilekou and southern Kontum provinces. In mid-April, however, emphasis of the operation turned to support of the Government of Vietnam (GVN) pacification program to help area villagers while at the same time destroying local force and VC guerrillas, who had resorted to hit and run, economy of force attacks against allied installations.

Early May brought with it increased battle action as a joint U.S.-ARVN force air assaulted into a secret base near the Cambodian border to cut off enemy infiltration. In five days of close-in jungle fighting, allied units killed 91 NVA and captured eight.

On May 11, 1969, a battalion of enemy "sappers" hit the brigade headquarters at Landing Zone Oasis in a fierce attack which lasted for four hours and left 45 enemy dead. Armored cavalry elements and helicopter gunships of the 1st Squadron, 10th Cavalry, attached to the brigade, pursued the retreating commandos after stifling the pre-dawn attack. The cavalrymen trapped the remaining sappers in dug-in fighting positions in the rolling bushlands west of Edap Enang and virtually wiped them out with devastating barrages of mini gun and rocket fire. A total of 65 NVA soldiers were killed by the Vav men 11 May.

Action continued light and scattered in the Brigade's AO through the summer and fall months of 1969 with brigade units participating

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in combined operations. One of the largest such operations involved a three-day sweep by three Vietnamese Regional Force (RF) companies from Ilciku Province, a Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) company from Flei Me, companies B and C of the 1st Battalion, 14th Infantry, and air elements of the 1st Squadron 10th Cavalry's Troop D.

In a later sweep of the "Golden Triangle" area 10 miles south of Camp Enari, the division base camp, brigade and ARVN forces killed six NVA in very light fighting.

During the summer months, the word "Vietnamization" became common to brigade soldiers as Americans worked to upgrade Vietnamese fighting units in President Richard Nixon's push to turn the brunt of fighting the war over to the Vietnamese.

Colonel Volney F. Warner, brigade commander, speaking of a combined operation during the period described them as being "tactically excellent."

"When you talk to both the Vietnamese and the American soldier at the end of one of these combined operations, it's amazing how much mutual respect and admiration the two show for each other....," he said.

On 26 October, the brigade moved its headquarters to Camp Enari, abandoning the Oasis.

On 6 November, two companies of NVA sappers launched a midnight attack on Landing Zone St. George, headquarters of the 1st Battalion, 14th Infantry, 15 miles south of Fleiku. "Golden Dragon" infantrymen repulsed the attack in a savage five-hour battle in which 41 enemy soldiers died.

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Operation "Hines" continued into 1970 with brigade units having seen more than 1340 consecutive days of combat.

In change-of-command ceremonies on 14 January, 1970 at Camp Enari, Colonel Warner turned over command of the 3rd Brigade to Colonel Gilbert J. Trocter Jr. of Tucson, Ariz. Colonel Trocter was the former commander of the 1st Battalion, 14th Infantry when they came to Vietnam from Hawaii in January 1966.

BRONCO BRIGADE

Formerly glorified as the Bronco Brigade of the 25th Infantry Division, the Third Brigade of the Fourth Infantry Division has recently finished a four year tour in the Central Highlands of Vietnam.

As an element of the 25th Infantry Division, the brigade arrived in Vietnam in January of 1966. Working in Pleiku Province, the unit participated in Operations TAYLOR, GARFIELD, LONGFELLOW, and BUCHANAN during its first eight months in country.

The Bronco Brigade then joined units from the Fourth Infantry Division in Operations PAUL REVERE IV and V around the Plei Djereng and Oasis areas. At that time the unit came under operational control of the Fourth Division and was to remain in that capacity until August 1967 when the two divisions swapped Third Brigades.

In the meantime Operation PAUL REVERE IV saw members of the Bronco Brigade in almost constant action against enemy forces. The toll of the operation was 878 North Vietnamese soldiers killed and another 78 captured.

Operation SAM HOUSTON was next on the agenda for the men of the Third Brigade as they continued missions in Pleiku Province. The campaign also brought the brigade into activities within Kontum Province and resulted in 733 enemy soldiers killed and another 306 detained.

In April the Bronco Brigade was involved in Task Force Oregon and deployed to Quang Ngai Province in an effort to reduce heavy enemy buildups in that region. Operating in and around Duc Pho, the brigade found itself

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in the midst of several heavy firefights with well trained and equipped NVA elements.

Over 1500 enemy died during the operation as the men of the brigade completely dominated each action they were part of. It was at the end of this operation that the brigade joined the Fourth Division in a major tactical trade.

The brigade was then shifted to Chu Lai where it conducted several operations north of this coastal city. While operating in that area the Ivymen scored a number of crippling blows against the enemy during their TET Offensive campaigns.

Until late August 1968 the brigade operated outside of Kontum City where they saw limited action against NVA forces temporarily occupying the area. The Bronco Brigade's presence in the area deterred enemy elements from entering the region according to indications by intelligence reports.

As September rolled around, the Third Brigade moved to the Oasis where it was to remain for over a year. In the early months, the brigade elements saw heavy fighting in the Chu Moor Mountains as enemy entrenched troops were driven from hillside after hillside.

The remaining months of 1969 saw elements of the brigade chase enemy forces along the Cambodian border as the enemy infiltrated from main supply routes. In several furious clashes Ivymen dominated NVA elements attempting to protect strongholds.

The Bronco Brigade was diverted to Camp Enari in November as the elements of the brigade continued operation in Pleiku Province. Working around the division base camp, the unit saw light action as the tempo of

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combat decreased in the brigade's area of operations.

In mid-January President Richard M. Nixon announced that the Bronco Brigade would be redeployed as part of a 50,000 man withdrawal. The redeployment was to be completed by April 15 and the brigade colors were to be retired, at that time.