

EPILOGUE

As of this writing the 6th Battalion, 27th Artillery is continuing to serve valiantly in Vietnam. The story of this battalion is far from a complete one at this time, yet certain truths are obvious even now. In spite of the fact that the US Army was well into the missile age in 1966-1967, the Redleg Battalion has provided the kind of definitive, usable firepower that was necessary to provide security to American and Vietnamese units in the Vietnam war. Its 8" howitzers and 175mm guns seemed something of an anachronism, yet they were able to place explosive charges easily and accurately where they were needed (even at long distances). The results could not but be noticed in the Battalion's areas of operation. Small, lightly fortified camps became fortresses when surrounded by the battalion's protective ring of fire. The outcome of ground contact with the enemy was many times swayed by the judicious placing of heavy artillery rounds. Harrassment and interdiction fire kept the VC on the move and denied him the use of secure base camps. The net result of this artillery fire, plus continued engagement by the ground forces, plus overwhelming American air superiority was such that a weakening of VC strength could be noted by May, 1967. The enemy found it increasingly difficult to mount an offensive, for his munitions, foodstuffs, medical supplies, even manpower, all seemed to be in short supply. His life was one of constant harassment, and his morale suffered because of it.

The introduction of certain new weapons and supplies served to relieve the situation a bit for the VC. He now had rockets at his disposal, and he used them with impunity, particularly along the DMZ and against large installations such as Da Nang and the Bien Hoa Air Base. There also seemed to be an increase in the number of North Vietnamese (as opposed to indigenous VC) combatants. There seemed to be a slight shift in the characteristics of the war in some areas. The enemy seemed less of a guerilla and more of a conventional soldier (this trend it must be admitted was slight if perceptible at all by May, 1967). The enemy remained as elusive, as cunning, as jungle wise as ever. However, the American presence was immovable also.

The situation faced by the Battalion in May, 1967 seemed fairly typical of the situation throughout Vietnam. After 17 months of combat, real progress for the American cause seemed slight. The enemy was clearly under more stress, but had been able to keep up the pace of combat. There was some progress in the psychological and ideological aspects of the war, for the GVN's position remained stable throughout the entire 17 month period. This gave the government an aura of strength that aided considerably in the government's gaining popular support for itself. Many of the more pragmatic Vietnamese supported the government because America's support of it offered obvious economic advantages to him that the communists could not hope to match. Ideological commitment was bound to follow.

Thus, the outlook was one of hope in both the military and ideological conflicts. The goal of a strong, stable, free government for the people of South Vietnam did seem more attainable by mid-1967. There was still no easy,

painless solution to the problems of Vietnam, for the communist element within the country seemed strong enough in May, 1967 to harass the populace for many years. Yet diligence and persistence would see the Vietnamese and their American friends through to the realization of both their aspirations. The 6th Battalion, 27th Artillery would of course continue to do its part, as it had done in the past.

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