

## PART IV

## THE VIETNAM COUNTEROFFENSIVE CAMPAIGN

With the beginning of the Vietnam Counteroffensive Campaign in January 1966, the first effects of the American buildup began to be felt. Though it was a slow and laborious process, the friendly forces did eventually succeed in wresting the initiative of battle from the enemy.<sup>1</sup> Yet progress was difficult to chart due to the unusual nature of the war.

American strategy in Vietnam was a complex blending of several different programs. One of these involved the creation and deployment of large, mobile ground forces. These were deployed in various tactical situations, aiming primarily at destroying the enemy's ability to fight. The emphasis was on mobility. Through the use of helicopters, ground forces could be airlifted rapidly into areas of VC dominance, often giving the Americans the advantage of surprise in their attacks. When the tide of battle turned against the Americans, reinforcements were easily brought to the scene by the same means, many times altering the outcome of the battle. Use of helicopters also, by and large, freed ground forces from being tied down to their lines of supply. Artillery and other support elements could (and often did) accompany the infantryman on these missions. This of course greatly increased the firepower and effectiveness of the aggregate force. The helicopter assault proved to be the most prevalent, most successful means of deployment in the Vietnam war.

The size of these heliborne units was as a rule kept small (generally battalion size or smaller) for two primary reasons: to retain mobility and because the VC elements encountered by them generally were below division size themselves. It was a war of small engagements. Large scale confrontations of entire armies never occurred at this stage in the conflict. Achievement of larger tactical objectives was accomplished by well organized, pre-planned combat operations. These were generally of battalion size or larger, and were code named. Ground forces were deployed by both air and ground means and usually stayed in the field for several days to several weeks. It was by this means primarily that the war brought to the enemy.

The 6th Battalion, 27th Artillery furnished fire support for a large number of these operations. On most occasions the batteries did not have to leave their base camps to furnish this fire due to the great range of the 175mm gun (it

---

<sup>1</sup>Ltr, MACOI-C, Subj: Summary of Events, First Quarter, Calendar Year 1966, p. 3.

could reach targets in excess of 20 miles). Thus the Battalion's total number of tactical moves was low. The 8" platoon accompanied the infantry units to the field more readily than the 175mm platoons (particularly in Alpha Battery).

The Battalion's first operation was JINGLE BELLS, held, appropriately, during the Christmas season, 19 - 20 December 1965.<sup>2</sup> It was followed by LAVENDER HILL, notable chiefly for the fact that the Battalion's fires produced a large secondary explosion,<sup>3</sup> and by Operation BLUE BALL.<sup>4</sup> RED BALL IV saw the batteries at Phuoc Vinh provide support fire for the 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division as the latter staged a resupply convoy to Phuoc Vinh.<sup>5</sup> After supporting QUICK KICK II, Battery "B" displaced to the village of Bo Mau II (1½ miles east of Phuoc Vinh) in support of Operation QUICK KICK IV from 24 January 1966 to 11 February 1966.<sup>6</sup> Battery "A" moved from Bien Hoa to Long Thanh in support of Operation MALLET on 29 January 1966. It assumed a new position during the same operation on 11 February and returned to base camp on 18 February 1966.<sup>7</sup> Another resupply convoy operation, RED BALL V, followed on 29 January 1966 to 1 February 1966.<sup>8</sup>

One of the Battalion's finest hours occurred during Operation ROLLING STONE, 10 February 1966 to 20 February 1966. This operation produced the first major contact between the VC and the 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division. Three confirmed, and possibly five battalions of VC had tried to overrun the field position of the 1st Brigade. The 6th Battalion, 27th Artillery (at Phuoc Vinh) was called upon to fire numerous countermortar plots located by the countermortar radar of the 1st Battalion, 5th Artillery. These fires effectively silenced the enemy mortars. The Battalion's guns also fired at numerous suspected VC troop locations, and placed a ring of defensive fires

---

<sup>2</sup>Commander's Daily Situation Reports, HQ, 6th Bn, 27th Arty, 19 Dec 65 and 20 Dec 65.

<sup>3</sup>SITREP, dtd 3 - 7 Jan 66.

<sup>4</sup>SITREP, dtd 12 - 14 Jan 66.

<sup>5</sup>SITREP, dtd 15 - 19 Jan 66.

<sup>6</sup>SITREP, dtd 24 Jan 66 - 11 Feb 66.

<sup>7</sup>SITREP, dtd 29 Jan 66 - 18 Feb 66.

<sup>8</sup>SITREP, dtd 29 Jan 66 - 1 Feb 66.

around the 1st Brigade perimeter. The combination of all these fires contributed significantly towards the 1st Brigade's repulsing the enemy attack. A body count made the next morning disclosed that over 140 VC had been killed in the battle. Many of these casualties were attributed to artillery fire.<sup>9</sup>

Operation SILVER CITY was a joint operation with the 1st Infantry Division, 173d Airborne Brigade and the 10th ARVN Division. The 6th Battalion, 27th Artillery served as a general support headquarters throughout the entire operation. Battery "D", 8th Battalion, 6th Artillery was attached to the Battalion, with Battery "B", 2d Battalion, 32d Artillery providing reinforcing fire for the Battalion. All in all the Battalion tactically controlled the fires of five widely separated heavy artillery batteries during SILVER CITY. This control was exercised through the use of FM/AM radios and by sole use/common use VHF circuits. At one point in the operation a battalion of the 173d Airborne was nearly surrounded by VC. The Battalion massed the fires of Battery "C", 6th Battalion, 27th Artillery and Battery "D", 8th Battalion, 6th Artillery onto a whole series of concentrations that surrounded the 173d Airborne's perimeter. In the resultant firefight artillery and air strikes were credited with a VC body count of over 350.<sup>10</sup> Battery "D", 8th Battalion, 6th Artillery received mortar fire during Operation SILVER CITY on 9 March 1966. One man from their battery was killed in action, and two men from the 6th Battalion, 27th Artillery were wounded. One vehicle from the 6th Battalion, 27th Artillery was damaged during the attack.<sup>11</sup>

On 30 March 1966, Battery "A" moved to Cam Tam in support of Operation ABILENE. It assumed a slightly different position in support of the same operation the following day, and returned to base camp shortly thereafter.<sup>12</sup> The Battalion then supported a series of small operations from its base camps. These were: MIAMI (16 April 1966 to 20 April 1966),<sup>13</sup> WILDWOOD (17 April 1966 to 24 April 1966),<sup>14</sup> and CHATTANCOGA (22 April 1966 to 24 April 1966).<sup>15</sup> Resupply

---

<sup>9</sup>Meritorious Unit Commendation, dtd 26 Nov 66 p. 2.

<sup>10</sup>Meritorious Unit Commendation, dtd 26 Nov 66 p. 2.

<sup>11</sup>SITREP, dtd 10 Mar 66

<sup>12</sup>SITREP, dtd 30 Mar 66 and 31 Mar 66.

<sup>13</sup>SITREP, dtd 16 Apr 66 and 20 Apr 66.

<sup>14</sup>SITREP, dtd 17 Apr 66 and 24 Apr 66.

<sup>15</sup>SITREP, dtd 22 Apr 66 and 24 Apr 66.

convoys (RED BALL VI AND RED BALL VII) also occupied Batteries "B" and "C" during this period.<sup>16</sup>

Operation BIRMINGHAM saw Battery "A" move to Tay Ninh Province to support the 1st Infantry Division's search and destroy efforts in that area. The Battery was attached to the 1st Division Artillery on 6 May 1966 and moved to Cu Chi that same day in preparation for the move further north. Battery "A" remained under the operational control of the 1st Division Artillery until the termination of BIRMINGHAM on 17 May 1966.<sup>17</sup> The battery's effectiveness during the operation was hampered by the onset of the torrential rains of the monsoon season. At one point the spade of an 8" howitzer was completely buried in mud due to the digging effect of a night of particularly hard shooting.<sup>18</sup>

The first half of 1966 was completed by the Battalion's participation in a number of smaller operations from their base camps. These were: ADELAIDE I (31 May 1966 to 9 June 1966), ADELAIDE II (7 June 1966 to 10 June 1966) ADELAIDE III (7 June 1966 to 10 June 1966).<sup>19</sup>

Yet in spite of this considerable support of operations, the Battalion was engaged in other aspects of fire support that proved of equal importance. The Battalion supported Special Forces camps in its area. This proved of primary importance, for the instantly available firepower made each camp much less vulnerable to frontal attack by the VC. The Battalion made the cost (in terms of VC casualties) of such an attack too high for the VC to attempt. The net result was that each camp so supported by the Battalion remained secure throughout 1966.<sup>20</sup> Fire support was extended to new camps as they were built in range of the Battalion's weapons.

The Battalion supported numerous operations conducted by the Special Forces personnel, six during the summer and fall of 1966 alone.<sup>21</sup> On one occasion the Battalion's air observer sighted yellow smoke and small explosions in an area in which the Special Forces were conducting an operation. An estimated VC force of two battalions was sighted. Radio contact with the Special Forces personnel on the ground was withheld until they requested a fire mission. Artillery was used to mark enemy positions for the bombers that were called in by the US Air Force Forward Air Controller (who had also arrived on the scene). Artillery pounded the enemy both before and after the bombers had dealt their destruction. Routes of enemy approach and withdrawal were sealed by artillery.

---

<sup>16</sup>SITREP, dtd 5 Mar 66, 6 Mar 66, 28 Mar 66 and 1 Apr 66.

<sup>17</sup>SITREP, dtd 6 May 66 and 17 May 66.

<sup>18</sup>Interview, 1LT John D. Klaitz, A Btry XO, 25 Aug 66.

<sup>19</sup>Meritorious Unit Commendation, dtd 26 Nov 66, p. 1.

<sup>20</sup>Interview, LTC Edward C. O'Connor, Bn Cmdr, 19 May 67.

<sup>21</sup>ltr, HQ, 6th Bn, 27th Arty, AVGE-YC, Subj: Operational Report on Lessons Learned (U), dtd 31 Oct 66, p.

In all sixty 8" rounds and fifty-seven 175mm rounds were expended.<sup>22</sup>

Artillery support was extended to various Popular Forces outposts and hamlets in the Battalion's area. On at least two occasions its support played a large role in preventing these camps from being overrun. On May 17, 1966 the Popular Forces outpost at Ap Bo La began receiving mortar and small arms fire from three different locations. Four 8" rounds were placed on all three targets, effectively silencing the enemy fire. Avenues of escape were also blocked by artillery fire. When the attack was over, the garrison commander commended the Battalion on its speed and accuracy of fire.<sup>23</sup> On June 19, 1966 the village of Ap Bo La began to receive small arms fire. The Battalion responded almost instantaneously with 26 rounds. Contact was broken immediately. The same night the Battalion fired at the location of three VC companies in the immediate area.<sup>24</sup>

Defense of the Phuoc Vinh base camp on occasion occupied the 6/27th. Nightly harrassment and interdiction fire from the Battalion, as well as from the 105mm howitzer and 4.2 mortar units also in Phuoc Vinh, was an effective deterrent against a major ground attack. Because of this, and because of the extensive program of patrols launched by the 1st Brigade and the various ARVN units in the area, Phuoc Vinh was never hit by a large ground offensive in 1966. HQ, B and C Batteries all maintained a system of outposts to protect their perimeters. The guards in these outposts seldom reported enemy activity. C Battery did receive sniper fire on the evening of December 6, 1965. The perimeter guards spotted the sniper, fired at him, and reported that he had dropped to the ground. However a check made the following morning could not locate the body.<sup>25</sup>

Phuoc Vinh did receive a number of minor mortar attacks in 1966. During the mortar attack of February 24, 1966 the Battalion received five direct hits within its area. There was no damage or injuries.<sup>26</sup> On March 8, 1966 a large mortar attack hit the camp beginning at 2230 hours. The Aviation Officer from the 23d Artillery Group (who happened to be flying in the area) observed lights. He directed the firing of illumination and HE rounds at these lights and extinguished them. After expending 30 rounds in a countermortar program, the enemy mortars were extinguished.<sup>27</sup> Another

---

<sup>22</sup>SITREP, dtd 11 Jul 66,

<sup>23</sup>SITREP, dtd 17 May 66.

<sup>24</sup>SITREP, dtd 19 Jun 66.

<sup>25</sup>SITREP, dtd 6 Dec 65.

<sup>26</sup>SITREP, dtd 25 Feb 66.

<sup>27</sup>SITREP, dtd 25 Feb 66.

mortar attack came on the evening of April 8, 1966. Battery "B" received eight rounds in its battery area. A total of 104 eight inch rounds were fired by the Battalion at likely mortar positions and avenues of withdrawal during the attack.<sup>28</sup> Four days later, on April 12, seven rounds from a 175mm recoilless rifle were fired at Phuoc Vinh.<sup>29</sup> None of these attacks inflicted many casualties or caused much damage.

As the months passed by, the 6/27th was engaged in many other projects outside of its tactical missions. Base camp areas were improved, living conditions were bettered and relations with the Vietnamese citizenry were promoted.

The Battalion's personnel section completed a permanent change of station on June 8, 1966, moving from Tan Son Nhut to Long Binh, collocating with the personnel sections from the other battalions in the 23d Artillery Group.<sup>30</sup> Battery "A" moved also, from Bien Hoa to Bearcat. This occurred on June 9, 1966. The battery assumed a new mission there, that of general support/reinforcing the 1st Battalion, 7th Artillery. This was a permanent change in both location and mission. On June 19th the battery converted one 8" howitzer to a 175mm gun.<sup>31</sup>

Due to normal rotation of personnel and the distinct lack of school trained replacements, the Battalion faced an acute shortage of FDC and firing battery personnel in mid-1966. This problem was solved by conducting an intensive on-the-job training program for the new personnel.<sup>32</sup> Training in the art of jungle fighting was provided to the men of the 6/27th by the Jungle Devil School, operated by the 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division.<sup>33</sup> Training new air observers proved to be rather difficult, taking much longer than was anticipated (40 to 70 hours). These new observers had to become so familiar with the terrain below that they could notice subtle day to day changes. He also had to be able to sense the gun-target line, as often the firing battery was out of sight. Additional training had to be given for night flights.<sup>34</sup>

The Battalion continued to actively participate in the Civic Action Program. The men of "B" Battery repaired the furniture of the Phuoc Vinh school. A box of hospital women's supplies donated by the Albion Women's

---

<sup>28</sup>SITREP, dtd 8 Apr 66.

<sup>29</sup>SITREP, dtd 12 Apr 66.

<sup>30</sup>Operational Report, July 66, p. 2.

<sup>31</sup>SITREP, dtd 10 Aug 66.

<sup>32</sup>Operational Report, Jul 66, p. 9.

<sup>33</sup>Battle Journal, HQ, 6th Bn, 27th Arty, dtd 15 Oct 66.

<sup>34</sup>Operational Report, May 66, p. 4.

Club, Albion, Michigan was given to the Phuoc Vinh dispensary. A box of children's clothing donated by relatives of the Headquarters Battery Commander was distributed to the needy children of Phuoc Vinh. Vietnamese laborers were utilized to clean the classroom of the school and to police the schoolyard. Over 200 pounds of soap were donated to an orphanage in Saigon.<sup>35</sup> The medical section engaged actively in the Medical Civic Action Program (MEDCAP). Visits were made to various villages in the Phuoc Vinh area to conduct clinics for those Vietnamese stricken by illness or injury. Technical assistance and vital medical supplies were given to the Phuoc Vinh dispensary.<sup>36</sup>

The Battalion experienced a period of severe personnel turbulence in September and October 1966, when large numbers of personnel who had served with the Battalion since its arrival in Vietnam completed their tours of duty and returned to the United States. Among those who departed was the Battalion Commander, Colonel Robert J. McKay. He was replaced by Major Edward C. O'Connor, who assumed command of the Battalion on September 1, 1966.

Troop morale (though always high) took a bit of an upswing in the third quarter of 1966. This was attributed to: an increase in the operational and materiel readiness posture, the R & R program, Special Services activities and the Battalion's building program. An Enlisted Man's Council was established. Two men were chosen from each battery to bring the grievances of the enlisted men to the Battalion Commander. These monthly meetings often brought legitimate problem areas out into the open. An increase in troop morale was the result.

In spite of the fact that the Battalion was in a combat zone, considerable emphasis was placed on individual and unit training. Beginning in December 1966 gunner's tests and maintenance exams were administered by-monthly to the gun sections. To increase motivation and a sense of competition among the gun sections, an award system was devised whereby the section with the highest score on these examinations received the "Best Gun Section in the Battalion" Plaque. Should the same section win this award three consecutive times, that section retained permanent possession of the plaque. Fire Direction Tests were similarly given. In this test an actual mission was given to each of the battery Fire Direction Centers. Both batteries fired at the same target, which was of equal distance from both. The batteries were scored on speed of computed data, accuracy of computed data (checked by the Battalion FDC) and accuracy of the actual round. A plaque was given monthly to the FDC that scored highest, with permanent possession being retained by the FDC that won the award three consecutive times. Additionally, a gunnery exam was administered monthly to all company grade artillery officers

---

<sup>35</sup>Operational Report, Jul 66, p. 5.

<sup>36</sup>Meritorious Unit Commendation, Nov 66, p. 2.

in the Battalion to keep these officers current in the artillerymen's specialty. The only difficulty experienced in administering these tests in a combat zone was due to occasional interruptions caused by tactical commitments.<sup>37</sup>

Other aspects of training were conducted as well. Maintenance classes on the 175mm gun were conducted by representatives from the Artillery Transport Detachment at Ft Sill. Additional classes were given by various technical representatives. Weapons familiarization firing for all personnel was conducted on a monthly basis. Personnel fired all TO&E weapons to include hand grenades.<sup>38</sup>

On September 19, 1966 the Battalion was alerted by higher headquarters to prepare a heavy artillery battery for rapid movement to Quang Tri Province (near the DMZ). It had been decided that the Marine elements operating in that area desperately needed heavy artillery support. As the Marines did not have a weapon as large and as powerful as the 175mm gun in their arsenal, it was up to the Army to provide this weapon.

In order to send the best possible unit to the DMZ, Major O'Connor created an amalgamated battery at Phuoc Vinh, mating the best portions of "B" and "C" batteries. The result was called Task Force 6/27 (or "B" Battery, from whence the major portion of its men and equipment came). The Task Force left Phuoc Vinh on September 23, 1966 and went to a position just south of the Song Be bridge, where it remained for two days. It then moved to the Service Battery location at Long Binh where it was completely resupplied and the vehicles rechecked. Two 8" howitzers were converted to 175mm guns during this period. On September 29th the battery's equipment was driven to Saigon and loaded onto an LST (Loading Ship Transport). Altogether 26 vehicles were loaded onto this boat, marking the first time a 175mm gun was transported anywhere by LST.<sup>39</sup>

The LST then sailed to Da Nang, taking four days to do so. At Da Nang the equipment was transferred from the LST to six LCU's (Landing Craft Utility) for further shipment to Dong Ha. This was necessary as the LST was too large to sail up the Cam Lo river to Dong Ha, whereas the smaller LCU's could. The major portion of the battery's personnel was flown to Dong Ha and met the equipment ships there. Following unloading, the battery moved overland to their new home at Camp J. J. Carroll, on the "artillery plateau" near Cam Lo. Approximately two and one-half hours later the battery fired the first heavy artillery round in support of Marines in the I Corps tactical unit by an Army unit.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>37</sup>Interview, CPT George F. Palladino, Pn S-3, 6 Jun 67.

<sup>38</sup>Ltr, HQ, 6th En, 27th Arty, AVGE-YC, Subj: Operational Report-Lessons Learned (RSC-CSFOR-65)(U), dtd 7 Feb 67, p. 7.

<sup>39</sup>The Redleg Courier, Vol. 1, No. 7, dtd 1 May 67, pp. 1-2.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid, p. 2.



On October 19, 1966 the 2d Battalion, 94th Artillery arrived on the artillery plateau. "B" Battery was attached to this organization shortly thereafter, eventually becoming known as Delta Battery, 2d Battalion, 94th Artillery. An unfortunate side effect of this was the loss of the battery's and former 6/27's call sign, "Redleg". Interestingly, the 6/27th taught the 2/94th a great deal about combat operations in Vietnam. The latter unit was newly arrived in Vietnam from Ft Sill and knew little about 6400 mil operation. They eventually adopted almost all of the standard operating procedures used by the "B" Battery Commander, CPT Gary E. Vanderslice.<sup>41</sup>

The battery received little control from the 2/94th on fire missions. The battalion usually supplied only the coordinates of the targets to be shot. All computing and checking of the fire data was done entirely within the battery's own fire direction center. Some missions came directly from the Marine elements.<sup>42</sup>

In October and November 1966 "B" Battery's operations became somewhat hampered by the onset of the monsoon season. Torrential rains created great discomfort and prodigious amounts of mud. The men were not equipped with adequate wet weather apparel, compounding the problem. Further discomfort was caused by the plummeting temperatures (readings in the 30° - 40° range were recorded). The battery could do little building because of the constant rain. Eventually the 2/94th supplied "hardbacks" (wooden tent frames and floors) which got the men out of the mud at least.

Bravo Battery experienced a number of other minor problems during its first few months at Camp Carroll. Ordnance support was negligible even though a team from the 185th Maintenance Battalion accompanied the battery on its trip to the I Corps area. Supplies were hard to come by. "B" Battery received its supplies through Marine channels at first. In spite of this an adequate supply system was not placed in operation for the battery until other Army units arrived in the area.<sup>43</sup>

Meanwhile the rest of the Battalion continued its normal operations. In order to keep the Battalion Commander informed of daily progress in the various areas of endeavor within the Battalion, morning and evening reports were begun in the Fall of 1966. The Battalion Commander, Executive Officer, S-1, S-2, S-3, Communication Officer, Motor Officer, Aviation Officer, Surgeon, Battery Commanders (when in the Phuoc Vinh area) and the Sergeant Major attended the morning briefing. The Battalion Commander, Executive Officer, S-2 and S-3 attended the evening briefing. The morning meeting was a review of the previous day's activities, current status report and a review of future plans. It allowed the Battalion Commander to pinpoint problem areas and to coordinate action to correct these areas. As all the primary staff personnel were in attendance, they were all informed

---

<sup>41</sup>Ibid, p. 3.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid, p. 3.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid, p. 3.

of what was going on within the Battalion. The evening briefings were a review of the Battalion's tactical operations. The harrassment and interdiction fire plan for that evening was discussed and appropriate changes made based upon the tactical worth of the targets. Ground maneuvers of friendly troops were discussed as well. Aerial reconnaissance and fire support of these operations were planned at that time.<sup>44</sup>

A comprehensive maintenance program was initiated in mid-September. The battery and battalion maintenance sections were collocated in Phuoc Vinh to insure proper supervision and utilization of all maintenance personnel. Formal motor stables were conducted. Maintenance records were examined and instruction given on proper methods of keeping records. The USARV (US Army Vietnam) Readiness Assistance Team (R&T) tested maintenance procedures and assisted in establishing correct maintenance procedures and Prescribed Load Lists.<sup>45</sup>

Beginning in the Fall of 1966 the 6/27th launched a major building program to get its men out of tents and into substantial buildings. It proved to be a prodigious undertaking, spanning many months. Building materials were received through both official (primarily the 168 Engineers) and unofficial channels. Troop labor was used almost exclusively in this self-help program. Direct engineer support was minor throughout. Though the labor involved was prodigious, the program was so successful that "HQ" and "C" Batteries were out of tents by April, 1967. The same feat was accomplished by Service Battery by June, 1967, while "A" Battery succeeded in housing all of its men in tents with wooden frames (considerably more substantial than their predecessors) by May 1967. It should be noted that semi-permanent buildings could not be built at Quan Loi; tent frames were the best that could be provided.

Progress of the building program can be gauged by progress in Headquarters Battery. By October 19, 1966 the battery had built quonset huts for the operations section, the medical section and the orderly room. A mess hall, three small BOQs and the framework for the Headquarters building completed the battery's substantial structures. Personnel at that time lived in 18 tent BEQs and two tent BOQs. By June 6, 1967 the battery had constructed 11 troop billets, 2 BOQs, 1 BEQ (for NCOs), an Officer's Club, an EM Club, remodeled a quonset for an NCO Club and completed an orderly room, a mess hall extension, a metro building, the Battalion Headquarters building, Battalion maintenance building and large apron pad and a hospital at Nuoc Vang. All this was done by a crew of six to eight men, primarily from the wire section. Captain Charles M. Hood, the Base Development Officer, drew the blueprints and determined the location of buildings. The plans were in accordance with directives from USARV. Laying of pads was greatly facilitated by the use of a cement mixer procured by the Service Battery Commander. Originally the building crew was comprised of men from

---

<sup>44</sup>Interview, CPT George F. Palladino, Bn S-3, 6 Jun 67.

<sup>45</sup>Operational Report, Oct 66, p. 4.

all batteries. After these personnel rotated home, "HQ" Battery provided all of its labor.<sup>46</sup>

The "C" Battery building program was equally comprehensive. Beginning in late November, 1966, the battery built steadily until April when they began to experience a shortage of materials. Eight troop billets, a supply quonset, a mess hall, a shower-latrine complex, an NCO Club, an EM Club, an executive post and an FDC were all built by troop labor with engineer assistance. In addition, wooden gun pads were constructed. These kept the guns clean, improved maintenance by keeping mud from the working parts on the guns and provided a level firing program.<sup>47</sup>

"A" Battery's building program was plagued by its many moves. While at Bearcat, the battery had constructed a mess hall, an orderly room-NCO Club, an EM Club, an XO Post-FDC, a BOQ and ten wooden tent frames. All this was left at Bearcat when the battery moved to Lai Khe in December 1966. Building was not renewed until after the battery became settled at Quan Loi on February 4, 1967. There they built 20 tent frame billets, a communications center, an XO Post, an underground, cement structure FDC, a mess hall (only one at Quan Loi), an Officers-NCO Club and an EM Club. Here too troop labor was used exclusively. Materials were brought from Service Battery by plane or convoy, or purchased on the local economy through the club funds.<sup>48</sup>

Service Battery's building program was in two distinct stages. The battery built a large building to house the 23d Artillery Group personnel section, another to house the Battalion S-4, a mess hall, a BOQ, an orderly room-supply room, a building for battery maintenance, an NCO Club and an EM Club. These projects were begun immediately after the battery's arrival in Long Binh and were completed by September, 1966. Further building was hampered, however, by the fact that the permanent location of the battery had not yet been firmly decided. A permanent home for the battery was established in February, 1967 through a series of conferences between the Battalion Commander, 23d Artillery Group Commander and the Long Binh Post Commander. The new area was immediately adjacent to the old area and was part of Long Binh Post, a huge complex which was slated to become the headquarters of the US Army in Vietnam. From that date onward Service Battery began erection of Adams huts. These were personnel billets made of light-weight, highly reflective aluminium and were highly reflective. These billets were designed especially for use in Vietnam and boasted extraordinary coolness on the inside. By June, 1967 eight Adams huts had been built. In addition the EM and NCO Clubs were remodeled. The building crew received engineer assistance only on the first hut. Three men from "HQ" Battery were sent to Service Battery to augment the building crew.<sup>49</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup>Interview, 1SG Emanuel T. Petite, 1st Sgt, HQ Btry, 6 Jun 67.

<sup>47</sup>Interview, 1LT Hubert E. Edenfield Jr., C Btry XO, 6 Jun 67.

<sup>48</sup>Interview, CPT Ervin F. Kamm Jr., A Btry CO, 7 Jun 67.

<sup>49</sup>The Redleg Courier, Vol. 1, No. 6, dtd 1 Apr 67, pp. 1-5.

The Battalion began controlling the fires of the batteries from the battalion FDC in September 1966. An elaborate system of double checks was devised whereby both battery and battalion Fire Direction Centers double checked their computations. The battalion FDC then checked the batteries' computations and made the decision to fire. This system worked well and did not cause any loss in reaction time. If communication with the batteries was lost, they assumed tactical control of their own fires after two minutes. The 6/27th was the only known organization in Vietnam to tactically control its fires by this system. It resulted in a complete elimination of artillery incidents (several were detected at the battalion level and stopped before any damage was done). It also placed the battalion's most experienced officers at the decision-making area, thus fully utilizing the knowledge they possessed.<sup>50</sup>

Other safety checks were instituted. The lay of each piece was checked by an officer or by the Chief of Section. Prior to the firing of each round, the Chiefs of Section were instructed to read back the quadrant, deflection and azimuth to the Executive Officer.<sup>51</sup>

An Adjutant General Inspection was held in the Battalion in October, 1966. Preliminary inspections were conducted by teams from within the Battalion and from II Field Forces in preparation for this inspection from USARV. The results of the AGI were quite gratifying. Periodic re-inspections were conducted in the following months by teams from the Battalion and from the 23d Artillery Group. Maintenance inspections were generally held concurrently. A continually high state of materiel and personnel readiness was the result.

In order to improve the quality of intelligence information within the Battalion's area of operation, a series of meetings were conducted in the fall of 1966 and the Spring of 1967. In attendance were the Battalion's organic aviators, observers and intelligence personnel, representatives from other units in the Phuoc Vinh base camp, the various supported Special Forces camps and the Air Force Forward Air Controllers, ARVN Advisers and others. These meetings resulted in a closer working relationship. Information was passed among these personnel at more frequent intervals. New methods of improving artillery support were discussed.<sup>52</sup>

The 6/27th continued its civic action program throughout the last quarter of 1966. The medical section conducted seven MEDCAP operations during that period, examining a total of 309 patients. Of these more than 40 were reported to be seriously ill. This program received increased with the arrival of a replacement surgeon. A Thanksgiving Day dinner was served to 50 children of the Phuoc Vinh school. A Christmas party was held for 320 children from the same school. The children were given refreshments

---

<sup>50</sup>Interview, CPT George F. Palladino, S-3, 6 Jun 67.

<sup>51</sup>Operational Report, Oct 66, p. 2.

<sup>52</sup>Operational Report, Feb 67, p. 6.

and a gift. A third party was held on 30 January 1967, in celebration of TET, the Vietnamese New Year. The Battalion provided musical entertainment and each child received a gift.<sup>53</sup> In a small way, each of these affairs aided in bridging the gap between the Americans and the Vietnamese.

Even greater opportunities for international good-will occurred when the Battalion launched an extensive program of hiring indigeneous personnel to serve as laborers and KPs. Both Americans and Vietnamese gained knowledge of the mannerisms and mores of the other's culture through daily contact. Some relief from the poor economic situation of the Phuoc Vinh villagers was afforded these laborers. In addition, the men of the Battalion were freed from having to perform some of the more odious tasks that had to be done. This program was eventually extended to include all the batteries of the Battalion.

A gradual improvement in the Battalion's supply picture was noted by October 1966, due to improvements in port facilities and stock accounting procedures. All units began to receive more adequate rations. Munition supplies flowed in regularly and were never in short supply. Some problems were still experienced in direct exchange of clothing, as the stockpiles of clothing were inadequate. Construction materials for troop billets were as a rule not available through official sources for self-help projects (yet the building program pushed on anyway).<sup>54</sup> By February 1967, replacement clothing began to be received in large quantities. The only difficulty remaining was that popular sizes were still in short supply. The Battalion received five frozen food cabinets, four 65-70 cu. ft. reefers and two ice making machines. These aided mess hall operation considerably. A new supply problem had arisen by that time. The Battalion's usage of electricity had increased considerably, creating a requirement for three 15kw generators. Considerable difficulty was experienced in obtaining these.<sup>55</sup> Many of these supplies were brought to the Battalion's Phuoc Vinh elements by large convoys that were controlled directly by the Battalion itself. Of the eight convoys that brought supplies to Phuoc Vinh between September 1966 and May 1967, three were controlled directly by the 6/27th (the 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division controlled the others). Each of these convoys was a large logistical operation, involving as many as 450 vehicles, and averaging four to ten days in duration. Routes 13 and 16 had to be secured by infantry units each time the convoy ran. In addition a cavalry troop generally provided tanks and armored personnel carriers to provide security for each march

---

<sup>53</sup>Ltr AVGE-YC, Subj: Operational Report - Lessons Learned (RCS-CSFOR-65) (U), dtd 7 Feb 67, pp. 12-13.

<sup>54</sup>Ltr AVGE-YC, Subj: Operational Report - Lessons Learned (U), dtd 13 Oct 66

<sup>55</sup>Ltr AVGE-YC, Subj: Operational Report - Lessons Learned (RCS-CSFOR-65) (U), dtd 7 Feb 67, p. 11.

Battalion control of these convoys was exercised from a helicopter which flew surveillance over the entire length of the convoy for as long as it was on the road. Constant monitoring of its progress from this aerial observation post enabled the Convoy Commander to keep it moving at all times. Rapid deployment of security forces or medical evacuation aircraft could also be easily accomplished from this helicopter. In addition the Battalion's operations center relayed information of possible trouble spots to each march unit commander, forewarning them to be especially watchful. The 6/27th never lost a vehicle or suffered a serious injury on the convoys it controlled. Occasionally vehicles were damaged by mines, and at least one medical evacuation flight was required on one occasion, but units other than the 6/27th were involved in every case.<sup>56</sup>

A prime booster of morale for the Battalion was the R&R (Rest and Recreation) program. Through this program each soldier was given the opportunity to visit one of several Far Eastern cities (later Hawaii was added to the list) for five to seven day periods, with transportation provided free by the government. In order to determine if the program was being adequately utilized, the Battalion conducted a survey. It was found in this comparative study that during the period June, 1966 to January, 1967 only 172 of 331 R&R quotas were used. This low percentage of use (51%) demonstrated that an increase in R&R quotas does not necessarily cause an increase in the financial capacity and desire of individuals for recreation.<sup>57</sup>

Charlie Battery added a new term to the artilleryman's vocabulary beginning in November, 1966, when it engaged in a number of "turkey shoots". These were a series of moves by the battery to positions outside the base camp, made to bring new targets into range that would otherwise have been out of reach. An average gain of 5000 meters was gained on each turkey shoot. A total of five shoots were conducted by "C" Battery during December and January. MEDCAPS were held in conjunction with three of these firings. On one occasion a direct fire exercise was held. Both the 8" platoon and the 175mm platoon participated. Four VC base camps were destroyed by these of these exercises. Net results were: increased proficiency of units, an increase in morale (by allowing the cannoneers to move out of a static firing position), and destruction of the enemy's belief that he could operate with immunity outside the range of the big guns.<sup>58</sup>

In October, 1966 "A" Battery was relieved from its mission of general support/reinforcing the 1st Battalion, 7th Artillery and was assigned the mission of general support/reinforcing the 2d Battalion, 77th Artillery.

---

<sup>56</sup>Interview, MSG Austin Price Jr., Bn Opns Sgt, 7 Jun 67.

<sup>57</sup>Operational Report, Feb 67, p. 13.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid, p. 14.