

Yank Platoon Balks at Defensive Task

PHU BAI, Vietnam (AP) — About 100 American soldiers from one of the last two combat infantry brigades in Vietnam balked at being assigned to man a forward defense position Wednesday because they considered it too dangerous.

They finally relented, but 45 of them carried out the order only when they were told their absence would endanger another U.S. unit already in the

area, one of the men said. He said the reluctant troops felt the path they had to take to get to the position was loaded with booby traps.

In Saigon, the U.S. Command said that none of the soldiers actually refused to go into the field or failed to obey orders of their officers and noncommissioned officers.

"The soldiers are presently occupying the originally

planned defensive position in the vicinity of Phu Bai," the command said in a statement. "The element is part of a 600-man task force moved into Phu Bai yesterday for the purpose of securing U.S. troops and installations in the Phu Bai area."

Phu Bai is just south of Hue, the ancient imperial capital and a presumed major target of the current North Vietnamese

offensive. The base is 57 miles south of the Demilitarized Zone.

The command's account said: "Today at 3 p.m., elements of the 2nd Battalion, 1st Infantry, 196th Infantry Brigade, were making preparations for movement to defensive positions in the vicinity of Phu Bai.

"Rumor to the effect that the area was an ambush site (Continued on Back Page, Col. 1)

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loaded with booby traps circulated among some members of the unit.

"Numerous correspondents were in the area interviewing soldiers. Several soldiers told correspondents that they did not want to go into the field. None of the soldiers actually refused to go into the field or failed to obey the orders of their officers and noncommissioned officers."

Correspondents who witnessed the incident gave this account:

When the men arrived from Da Nang by transport plane, they were ordered into trucks to be taken near the area they were to patrol, about three miles west of Phu Bai.

The troops would not move. A lieutenant asked for volunteers,

and a handful got aboard the trucks. Then a captain and senior noncommissioned officers talked to the men, and within an hour all of them got aboard except one platoon of approximately 45 men.

Lt. Col. Frederick P. Mitchell, the commander of the battalion, told them to get aboard the trucks and they would be taken to the U.S. compound near the air base. He apparently wanted to get them away from newsmen who had covered their arrival.

Mitchell turned to the newsmen and said: "All you press are bastards. I blame you for this and you can quote me on it."

The men got aboard the trucks and were then taken to the compound. There all of the company except the one platoon piled aboard trucks to go to their forward position.

Mitchell told the reluctant platoon that another company, Alpha Company, had been flown into the same area by helicopter during the morning and that the Alpha men would be vulnerable to attack if the platoon did not move into the area.

Pfc. Terry Simons said that on that basis, the platoon would go. Simons said he was from Michigan but did not disclose his hometown.

He said the men balked initially because they felt the area was highly booby trapped. The trucks were to take them only near the area and they would have to walk approximately two miles, he said.

The Americans resented hav-

ing to walk through a booby trapped region while U.S. helicopters that could have taken them were supporting South Vietnamese troops, Simons said.

He said the men also didn't feel it was possible to defend the position because all told there were only 200 Americans in the two U.S. companies and they were outnumbered by large North Vietnamese forces on the offensive.

April 1972

OPERATION AND PREVENTIVE MAINTENANCE
The M16A1 Rifle

HOW TO STRIP YOUR BABY

LETTER BY LETTER HOW TO STRIP YOUR BABY

1. Remove magazine. 2. Open bolt, check for jam. 3. Press slide back to lock with cartridge in place. 4. Pull back on charging handle and lock receiver assembly.

5. Remove the bolt handle. 6. Remove the bolt handle. 7. Push out the magazine. 8. Push out the magazine. 9. Push out the magazine. 10. Push out the magazine. 11. Push out the magazine. 12. Push out the magazine.

13. Push out the magazine. 14. Push out the magazine. 15. Push out the magazine. 16. Push out the magazine.

FURIOUS BATTLE

Newweek, April 24, 1972

Military men in a plaintive tone can be defeated only by the Communists. On Easter Sunday, the master of guerrilla warfare in the South, Gen. Nguyen Van Giap, ordered his forces to attack the conventional battle of the Ap Bac region. In a surprise move, he sent thousands of men to the front lines on the night of April 10, and in a matter of hours, he had captured the area.

Forcements, the Army of South Vietnam (ARVN) had so far found it impossible to dislodge the enemy from the provincial capital of An Loc. Ominously, Communist rockets began to crash into such major cities as Da Nang and Saigon. There was even an embarrassing moment when a unit of the U.S. 196th Light Infantry Brigade, sent to guard a super-secret radio installation at Phu Bai, briefly refused to carry out orders. Yet although the situation was dicey enough to force Presidential adviser Henry Kissinger to cancel a trip to Japan, the U.S. command felt confident that the ARVN, with the support of U.S. air power (page 12), could blunt the offensive. In part, this cautious optimism was born of some encouraging battlefield successes by the ARVN. After North Vietnamese tank columns smashed through



ARVN tr

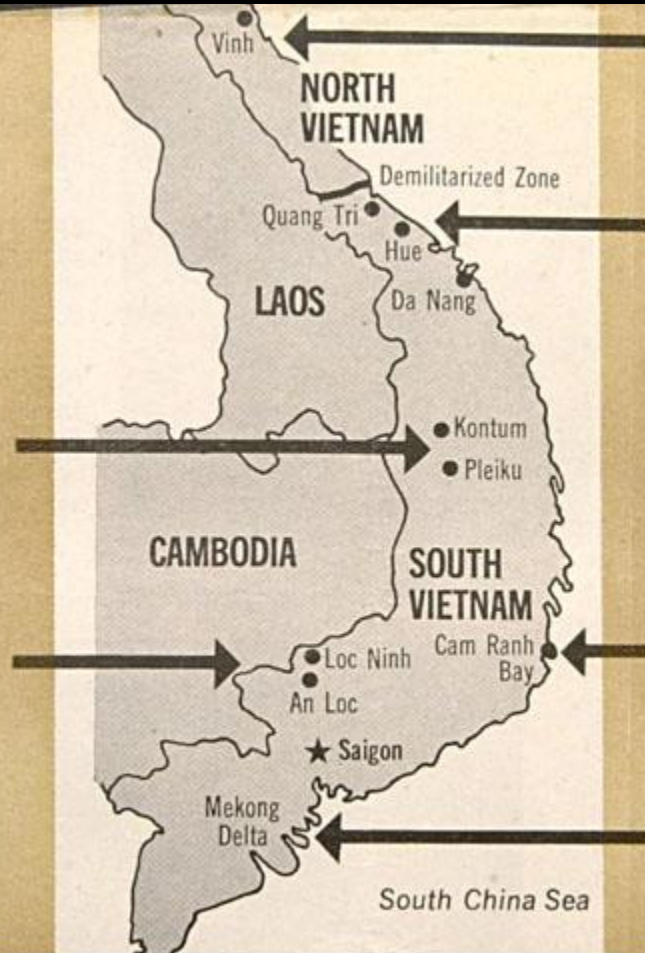


Building new mortar pits. Left to right on sandbags: Capt. Green, John Barna, Dan Fletcher, (?), Richard Borden, (?). Tom Hart's back, Ken Berry's butt. April, 1972

TIDES OF BATTLE

Communists on move in Central Highlands, menacing Pleiku and Kontum. U. S. air power and Saigon's Army maneuver to keep Communists from cutting country in half.

Reds capture Loc Ninh but fail initially to take provincial capital of An Loc, 60 miles from Saigon, when fresh South Vietnamese troops, U. S. air power, enter fight.



American B-52s bomb North Vietnam for first time since late 1967. Attacks on Vinh and MIG base at Bai Thuong are deepest raids ever by B-52s over enemy territory.

Major Communist invasion goal is seizure of Quang Tri and Hue—two provincial capitals. South Vietnamese, reeling under initial attacks by troops, tanks and artillery, dig in, begin to hold, and then carry the fight to the Reds.

Cam Ranh Bay, one of three U. S. combat enclaves, comes under long-range Communist fire. GI's at Da Nang, Phu Bai and near Hue also are hit by rockets and mortars.

Viet Cong guerrillas harass villages in Mekong Delta hoping to prevent Saigon from moving military forces north to reinforce more important battlefields.

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