ORAL HISTORY

Lieutenant General John H. Cushman
US Army, Retired

VOLUME THREE, TABLE OF CONTENTS

In approving the printer's proof of Chapter Seventeen I did not notice that several paragraphs were missing. Here I have corrected that omission. The software dictates that Volume Three's page numbers appear before footnotes. JHC

Preface

I undertook this Oral History project in early 2009. In late 2008 I had arranged with Conrad Crane (Colonel, US Army, Retired) to begin it with an interview in January 2009 at the US Army Military History Institute at Carlisle Barracks, PA, where Colonel Crane was then Director. Subsequent interviews have taken place at the Knollwood Military Retirement Residence in Washington, DC, where I live.

The interviewer has been historian Robert Mages. Until March 2011 Mr. Mages was assigned to the Military History Institute. Since then he has continued the project while assigned to the Center of Military History, Fort McNair, DC, where assigned duties have limited his availability for conducting, transcribing, and editing interviews.

The project has become substantial, not to say massive. Its planned extent:

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1	*Born in China*	*1-1 to 1-13*
2	*Growing Up*	*2-1 to 2-15*
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13	*With the Army Concept Team in Vietnam*	*13-1 to 13-15*
14	*With the ARVN 21st Division, Vietnam*	*14-1 to 14-18*
15	*At the National War College*	*15-1 to 15-10*
16	*At the 101st Airborne Division, Fort Campbell, KY*	*16-1 to 16-9*
17	*Cdr 2d Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, Vietnam*	*17-1 to 17-34*
	(the above have been transcribed and jointly edited in MSWord)	
18	**Cdr Fort Devens, MA**	
19	**Advisor, IV Corps/Military Region 4, Vietnam**	
20	**Cdr 101st Airborne Division & Fort Campbell, KY**	
21	**Cdr Combined Arms Center and Commandant CGSC**	
	(interviews for the above have been partially recorded)	
22	**Cdr I Corps (ROK/US) Group, Korea**	
23	**In Retirement I**	
24	**In Retirement II**	
	(interviews for the above have yet to be recorded)	

For my own distribution in November 2012 I had Chapters 1 through 7 (Volume One) printed and in February 2013 I had Chapters 8 through 13 (Volume Two) printed. This is Volume Three, similarly self printed in March 2013. (JHC)

Chapter Fourteen, With the 21st ARVN Division

INTERVIEWER: In early July 1963 you took over as senior advisor to the ARVN 21st Infantry Division. How was the advisory effort organized?

GENERAL CUSHMAN: The advisor teams came under MACV [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam] commanded by General Harkins [General Paul D. Harkins], from a joint headquarters in Saigon. MACV commanded Army units in Vietnam (aviation, engineer, signal and other), grouped under the Army Support Command, Vietnam; it was commanded by Brigadier General Joseph G. Stilwell, III, son of the famous "Vinegar Joe." There were then no US combat units in Vietnam. Under MACV, Major General Timmes [Major General Charles J. Timmes] commanded all the advisors. His title was Commander, Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG), Vietnam. The ARVN (Army of the Republic of Vietnam) was organized into four corps, from I Corps in the north to IV Corps in the south. Each corps had US Army advisor teams at all levels down to battalion, where there was an officer and a sergeant. IV Corps was in the Mekong Delta region. It had three infantry divisions, the 7th, 9th, and 21st. Each division was assigned a tactical area containing a number of provinces. Each province chief commanded a military force consisting of Civil Guard companies and Self Defense Corps platoons.

The headquarters of the 21st Infantry Division and of my MAAG Advisory Team 51 were at Bac Lieu in Ba Xuyen province, deep in Vietnam's Delta. The division commander was Colonel Bui Hu Nhon. Colonel Nhon also commanded the 42d Division Tactical Area. When I joined the 42nd DTA had six provinces; in early October they became four as the Government of Vietnam (GVN) grouped the provinces along the Cambodian border into a special tactical zone. Thus, for most of my time with him, Colonel Nhon was responsible for the security of Vietnam's four southernmost provinces. A million and a half people lived there, south of the Mekong River, in a region about the size of Connecticut. The land was rice paddies interlaced by canals except for the U Minh forest on its west coast which was fully possessed by the Viet Cong. Enemy main force and local force units, locally recruited, and village guerillas were throughout the area. They were equipped with weapons that they had captured and that had been infiltrated over the coast or through Cambodia. Cadres from North Vietnam had infiltrated but no units.

INTERVIEWER: What was your mission?

GENERAL CUSHMAN: I described it in a letter of July 10 to my wife: "This is a complex job. There are three parts to it. One part is to administer a 200 man detachment - half of it scattered across the Delta south of the Bassac - to feed, pay, replace, promote, discipline, motivate, understand, etc. all these people. One part is to assist the 21st Division commander and his province chiefs in 'province rehabilitation' - i.e., wresting the countryside from the insurgents and pacifying the countryside. And one part is to advise and assist the division and province troops in conducting operations against the Viet Cong - use of helicopters, etc. Each part is closely woven into the other. My problem is to get a grip on each of them and at the same time to remember that I am only an advisor. It makes for interesting days."

My assignment had recently been made a job to be held by a colonel, I was a lieutenant colonel and not on a list for full colonel, but General Stilwell didn't seem to care. In Bac Lieu I had a deputy, LTC Bob Delpino, a strategic hamlets advisor, LTC Joe Bruton, and a sizable team of division staff advisors, plus a USAF major and lieutenant, an air liaison officer (ALO) and a forward air controller (FAC); he had an L-19. We also had at Bac Lieu two Army L-19s, with pilots. I had advisor teams with each regiment; they in turn supervised subordinate teams at the battalions. I also had a senior advisor in each province supervising subordinate advisors working with province units of the Civil Defense Corps and the Self Defense Corps. The US advisory chain of command ran parallel to the Vietnamese chain. This allowed crosstalk up and down the advisor chain, between advisors and their counterparts and within the counterpart's chain of command. This was a way for the senior advisor to work things out, get things done.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about the operations.

GENERAL CUSHMAN: Let me quote from a letter home on July 27: "An operation has a typical set sequence to it - we are informed by members of the Vietnamese division staff that the division commander is thinking about going after a particular target or moving some of his forces into a particular area. After a little while the tentative thinking becomes more definite and detail planning begins - selection of exact area, troops to be used, plan of maneuver, etc. Then in due course I am invited by the division commander and look at what he has cooked up and my advice is solicited. Then comes the question as to whether the resources will be made available - especially the helicopters. During the evening the planning is at a more and more accelerated tempo. Finally the operation starts. If we are away from Bac Lieu, I fly down in my L-19 or on a helicopter. We set up shop, say at Ca Mau, in tents and I spend the night in the house of the province chief. I stay around the command post almost all the time - or at the nearby airstrip from which the helicopters depart. Sometimes I get in an airplane or helicopter and go out over the area of operations with radio contact to observe.

"I have found that my counterpart, Colonel Nhon, does not like to change his plan after asking for advice or opinion on my part. And of course I'm careful to phrase my comments as tactfully as I can. However, he usually incorporates my views into the next operation, showing that it is simply a question of not wanting to lose face but at the same time willingness to listen to someone else's ideas. He is actually a very fine person to work with. He has problems that I do not begin to realize and my advice and that of all my advisors does not cover even half of his range of concerns."

That was what I wrote my wife in late July.

INTERVIEWER: How did your relationships with the division commander evolve?

GENERAL CUSHMAN: They grew better week by week. On September 25 I wrote my wife: "We in the advisory team are doing all right. We are having a useful effect on this

division and on our area of responsibility. After three months I have reached the point that the division commander and staff trust my judgment and fully welcome my advice. But one must always be careful to be humble and to retain a knowledge of one's weaknesses and a sense of perspective to one's small achievements."

INTERVIEWER: How did you use Army aviation?

GENERAL CUSHMAN: We had helicopter support. The buildup of Army aviation in Vietnam had begun in late 1961 with the arrival of three companies of H-21s. Although a few companies equipped with UH-1s (Hueys) had deployed by mid-1963, H-21s remained for a while the principal available helicopter. I think that it was in about August 1963 that the Army Support Command created a provisional Delta Aviation Battalion, its headquarters at Can Tho airfield near IV Corps, and soon after that it stationed a Huey company at Soc Trang.

The most important element in heliborne operations was timely intelligence. The Vietnamese were the ones who had to produce that. What we provided was the air mobility for the rapid response needed to catch the enemy before they could get away. This calls for close communication with the supporting aviation units so we asked the Delta battalion for a liaison officer. Sometimes we would tell them that we were going to launch an operation on a particular day but we weren't sure where we were going to go. Sometimes we would say we have a huge opportunity right now; let's get all we can right away. These two situations are different and the supporting aviation unit has to be responsive. The aviation battalion in the Delta had companies of UH-1 Hueys in addition to HC-21 companies. I got to know the battalion commander. Ace Philips was a grizzled, experienced lieutenant colonel aviator with a couple of sharp majors working for him. One time we had an operation laid on and the helicopters didn't show up. The liaison officer said that battalion had cancelled it because of poor weather. The weather was fine so I went to see the battalion commander. I said, "The weather is fine." He said, "It's forecasted to be bad." I said, "We don't do it that way. If you show up and the weather is bad then we will cancel the operation but right now the weather is fine so let's go." He cancelled the operation anyway and I was really irate with him. I said, "Colonel, I don't mind you getting flight pay for your job. What I really object to is your getting your base pay." That was harsh but we eventually got along OK.

INTERVIEWER: Did you integrate these operations with available artillery?

GENERAL CUSHMAN: Yes. The Vietnamese could do that, in time; our advisors helped them figure it out. It wasn't anything like the techniques developed later by the 1st Cavalry Division. We weren't trying to surround the Viet Cong as I did later wth the 2d Brigade of the 101st in 1968. We were just trying to make contact.Air mobility was useful but not decisive. What was decisive in Vietnam was pacification.

INTERVIEWER: What guidance were you given on pacification?

GENERAL CUSHMAN: General Stilwell had told me "strategic hamlets are the name of the game." I was to assist the effort to establish and strengthen strategic hamlets. In the larger picture it was called "province rehabilitation," the US-Vietnamese effort that involved activities across the government and civilian sectors in addition to those military. In Vietnam on the US side these were directed by the US Embassy. The Embassy deputy chief of mission, William Trueheart, carried the ball using the Trueheart Committee. Its members represented the US aid agency (US Operations Mission, or USOM), the CIA, and other concerned parties. The basic approach was the GVN [Government of the Republic of Vietnam] strategic hamlet program.

The Viet Cong were taking over sections of the countryside, intimidating the people, killing the village chiefs, running assassinations squads, building a guerilla force. The GVN had tried all kinds of measures to beat back the Viet Cong, without success.The strategic hamlets concept had been derived from the British experience in Malaya. The idea was to separate the population from the guerrillas by moving them into hamlets which were then fortified and in which the people were given weapons so that they could defend themselves.

I had gotten a rudimentary understanding of what was going on by traveling throughout the country while I was at ACTIV. And Fred Ladd had said to me, "They've stretched themselves too far with these strategic hamlets. They're just putting them in to 'check the box.' They put these villages behind barbed wire and call them secure. They are not secure. GVN forces are now overextended." It soon became clear to me that this was the case.

So on July 15 I wrote my wife: "We are having our sector advisors conference this morning. They all came in yesterday. Talked until late." On July 16 I wrote: "We had quite a good conference of sector advisors - at least I thought so. The object of the exercise was to have each of my six sector advisors, plus my advisor to Father Hoa's Sea Swallow Sector, present an analysis of the problem in his sector. Each sector (which is a military name for a province, which is a political term - sector commander and province chief is the same man) has a different problem. Together (my provinces} make up a most complex situation. I wound up the conference by giving my guidance on how to proceed."

(Father Hoa was a Chinese Catholic priest who had brought his flock by boat from China after the Chinese Nationalist government fell to the Communist in 1949. He had settled them in thinly populated territory at the southern tip of the Ca Mau peninsula. There they had established a farming community centered on a small village which they had fortified and successfully defended against the Viet Cong who controlled everything around them. They called the village and themselves Hai Yen, which means Sea Swallow in Vietnamese. Father Hoa was nominally a subordinate of Colonel Nhon, supported by him. He had his own ways of getting resources and operating independently)

I didn't put it in my letter to my wife but what I told my sector advisors was basically, "I want you to go back to your counterpart province chief and together you will prepare a

map of your province with the areas you control shaded in blue, the areas controlled by the Viet Cong shaded in red and contested space shaded in yellow. Then I want in you to bring it in here and we'll see how your boundaries match up."

INTERVIEWER: How did you define spaces controlled by the Republic of Vietnam and spaces controlled by the Viet Cong?

GENERAL CUSHMAN: We defined government control, blue, as an area in which, one, officials could move around unescorted and a village chief could sleep in his home unguarded, and, two, the Viet Cong did not openly collect taxes. We called an area red where there was no symbol whatever of government authority, not even an outpost, and where the government's reach existed only when armed troops passed through on an operation; after that the territory closed behind them to Viet Cong control. We colored all other areas yellow, for contested.

My province advisors returned with their maps and we put them together, ironing out with the advisors' help where province judgments differed at boundaries. We created a large map of the division's provinces and built a picture of our situation. It turned out that only about six percent of the division area was blue, mostly in and near the province capitals and district towns. About forty percent of the area was red. All the rest was yellow, contested. That showed us the dimensions of our problem. I shared the map with the Colonel Nhon, who seemed to appreciate it.

All of this took time to put together. Meanwhile I was familiarizing myself with the tactical situation and going out on operations, either independently or with the division commander.

INTERVIEWER: When did your ideas on pacification begin to evolve?

GENERAL CUSHMAN: In August our Advisory Team 51, working with our counterparts, began writing a province rehabilitation plan for each province and for the 42nd DTA. These were to be in accordance the Trueheart Committee's master plan. That plan was still based on the GVN's faulty strategic hamlet concept. Our approach called for no new strategic hamlets, for improvements in existing strategic hamlets, and for a realistic assessment of each one's status. It also called for the elimination of those vulnerable outposts in contested areas that were simply an invitation to the enemy to attack. To my wife:
August 11; "This meeting (with my sector advisors and key people from Saigon and Corps) is a way to change the pattern of our work to one of more emphasis on province of rehabilitation ...we have not had a single coordinated plan for the zone - and the result has been a series of uncoordinated separate plans. I intend to have a single plan if I have to write it myself."
August 13; "I had all my sector advisors in... We went through the whole gamut of problems in province rehabilitation. ...in the last half of September I will have a longer conference."

August 30: "The problem is to get a grip on what makes things move - then make them move. The question is "how."

We plugged away, developing plans as directed with the Vietnamese, and meeting periodically with Corps and the Trueheart Committee.

In October or so, perhaps earlier, I had an epiphany. I remember accompanying one of our Vietnamese battalions on an operation in a red area. We came across a particular hamlet. As usual there were women and children but no men. I went into a small schoolhouse. I noticed that its books had been printed in Hanoi. I went into a village office. I saw tax receipts and population rosters. Everywhere I looked I saw evidence of governing. I thought to myself, "These people are living under a Viet Cong government. They've got tax collectors, a school, a working structure of government. They have a village chief and over him a district chief and over that a province chief. Our intelligence people know who these officials are."

I saw vividly that in our area of responsibility there were two governments. One was the government of the duly constituted Republic of Vietnam, with its province chiefs and district chiefs and their bureaucracies and their military forces, police, and hamlet militia. The other was the government of the enemy. It also had its province and district chiefs. It had its tax collectors and administration. It had its own armed forces and enforcers.

Its leaders were not in fancy buildings, probably in dug-in huts in the countryside. However, unlike the Government of Vietnam, they had a well developed organization and doctrine aimed at expanding their hold on the countryside. Its roots went back to Mao Tse Tung. And it was working.

I said to myself "These two governments are competing for the same people." And I realized that we had to figure out a way, with an organization and doctrine that was equal to or better than the organization and doctrine of the enemy, to get these people to come over to our side. That was my epiphany.

In mid-October and early November two significant events took place. One was the arrival of a replacement for Joe Bruton, my departing strategic hamlets advisor. The replacement was Bob (LTC Robert M.) Montague. Bob was a brilliant officer and a great organizer, first in his 1947 class at West Point. I had arranged with Dick Stilwell for his assignment to my advisory team. To work on province rehabilitation, Bob soon teamed up with a US foreign service officer newly graduated from Brown University, assigned to the US Aid mission in Saigon and stationed in Soc Trang, Ba Xuyen province's capital. His name was Richard Holbrooke.

Bob and I, with Dick Holbrooke and a grizzled English speaking major from the division staff named Major Yi, began to work together to develop an organization and concept of operation to province rehabilitation for use division-wide.

The other significant event was the November 1 coup that overthrew the regime of President Ngo Dhin Diem. It brought about his death and that of his brother and counselor Ngo Dinh Nhu, and it placed in power a triumvirate of Vietnamese Army generals.

NTERVIEWER: Did you have warning of that coup?

GENERAL CUSHMAN: None specific, but we were not all that surprised. Buddhist unrest had been growing in Saigon since early 1963. Shortly after midnight on August 21 Republic of Vietnam special forces raided Buddhist pagodas in major cities in series of synchronized attacks. Rioting in streets. Martial law declared. From my letters home:
August 21: "We have no knowledge of what is really going on, or why the state of siege was declared. Meanwhile outposts are attacked, hamlet people are harassed and intimidated by the Viet Cong..."
August 24: "I came up (to Saigon) this afternoon for a quick visit and some business and fly back tomorrow morning... No one knows what the real situation is here in this town except the Vietnamese in charge of things and I don't think they are telling the Americans. Tragic state of affairs which if it goes on cannot help but slow down operations against the VC. It has not yet done so in my area. My division commander is taking the situation calmly. No election however until further notice and that is too bad.""
August 30: "The main concern of the Diem government is now to remain in power, and most of their attention is on that. Meanwhile in the 21st Div area life goes on."
September 3: "Here south of the Bassac the situation on its face is unchanged. The Vietnamese do not tell us all they think. There's no doubt as to the seriousness of the problem and its effect on the current drive to defeat the insurgents and rehabilitate the countryside. A serious setback, and more so each day as the present instability continues. We continue our work, however."

Colonel Nhon made me aware that something was up. About a week before the coup itself, I was in his office and he said something like, "I can't understand what's going on. We have not received our fuel ration for this quarter and now I am being told that our yearly fuel ration has been cut in half. They tell me that I will have to make do for the next nine months on one-third of our normal allowance. They're putting pressure on me. Something bad is happening here and it worries me." The fuel for the ARVN was provided by the United States. It turned out that the US government was withholding such material assistance in order to pressure President Diem into changing policy.

The commander of the IV Corps was Brigadier General Huynh Van Cao, With three important divisions just south of Saigon, he was loyal to President Diem. In late October the Vietnamese Joint General Staff transferred his 7th Infantry Division, the unit closest to Saigon, to the III Corps. That made us think that something was going on.

On the day of the coup General Cao was traveling around the IV Corps area. As Colonel Nhon and I were with him in the house of the Ca Mau province chief when Cao's aide came in and whispered in his ear. Cao left us, went right to his helicopter, and flew away. The coup had started. He was too late. It was bloodless down where we were but it was bloody up in Saigon. With that, everything changed.

INTERVIEWER: What was the effect of the coup?

Command changes began immediately. General Cao was out at V Corps, replaced by Brigadier General Nguyen Huu Co; as a colonel he had commanded the 7th Division. Colonel Nhon was replaced by his deputy division commander, the quickly promoted Colonel Cao Hao Hon. Within a few weeks, every province chief had been replaced.

A new breeze was blowing. Within weeks General Co published, in Vietnamese and English, a "Guide Book for officers and noncommissioned officers (platoon to regiment) in ARVN, Civil Guard, and Self Defense Corps units of the IV Corps Tactical Zone." Its opening words were:

"1964 is the year of decision. Fourth Corps as well as all other friendly Corps, has taken a step into a new phase, the phase of REVOLUTION. This new phase requires a complete redirection and reevaluation in the areas of tactics, logistics, organizational procedures and in mental and psychological attitudes. To achieve the goals of this revolution, we must bury and forget all the serious mistakes made in the past as well as those of the present."

Weeks before, Major Yi had told Bob, Dick, and me about an idea used by the French in Algeria, known as the "oil spot" concept. It called for a gradual, step-by-step, process that would start from a small populated area, such as one of our hamlets, under government control, and would move outward with an organized effort, bringing government control to hamlets one at a time. Adopting the idea, we were well along on the Oil Spot concept of pacification.

When we presented our thinking to Colonel Cao Hao Hon, he supported the concept with enthusiasm, contributing his own ideas. He got his staff involved. He decided early that the primary mission of his division would be to support the pacification effort. While the 21st Division would continue to seek out and destroy enemy units in the countryside, operations in support of "oil spots" would be the division's priority.

Colonel Hon established a division training school for pacification groups right there at division headquarters and staffed it with instructors. Team 51 provided advisors. Together they developed lesson plans in both English and Vietnamese. Bob Montague and Dick Holbrooke worked alongside them. Both sides, US and Vietnamese together, began to develop the details of the concept. We put the entire program down in writing and made lesson plans so that we could set up a training school in each province and began to teach the concept to our advisor teams.

Bac Lieu was in Vinh Loi district. The division commander and I went to see the district chief. Looking at his map, I asked him, "Tell us what you control." He pointed, "This is an area we control." I said, "Let's go out and take a look." He said, "I've got to get my civil guard company as escort" I said, "That means you really don't control it. Let's start from an area that you do control." Working with him, we found a suitable spot to start.

A light turned on for that young district chief. He began to understand the real challenge facing him.To test our concept and our lesson plans we set up a pilot model oil spot expansion at that very spot, and began training our first pacification group, to go in there.

All the while I was describing our effort In letters to my wife.

On January 25th I wrote, "We have a big meeting today. We went over the charts yesterday with the division commander. It should be pretty interesting. We are inaugurating a new concept - the oil spot expansion concept. It's a new name for an old way to win in counterinsurgency. We will see how it goes down with our subordinates and visitors this morning."

January 27: "About two months to go. I think these last two months will be the longest for me. I will be very busy - we have a tremendous planning effort to accomplish, and a big program to start into execution - a program to which I will be committing my successor for practically his whole tour."

January 29: "I met last night with one of the Vietnamese officers who will help us with training and organization for our first application of the oil spot expansion concept right here in Vinh Loi. The Vietnamese are a fine race. More friendly than Japanese, less hard-working and more family loving. I hope that we can help them save their country. It will be a tough job. The Viet Cong have been at this sort of thing much longer."

January 30: "Today we will go to Soc Trang for a meeting of the district chiefs of Ba Xuyen province. We'll explain our new 'oil spot expansion concept.' We are very much in the rudimentary, early learning stages with this concept. It looks fine on paper, but we have yet to see anyone try it. We will see how it goes in Vinh Loi district."

January 31: "Well, we had a coup yesterday - a bloodless transfer of power by force. I heard about it by phone... and was the one to inform the division commander... By evening word had been received that everything was back to normal."

February 4 (written from Saigon): "I am staying with one of the USOM men from my division area - Dick Holbrooke, who is a young, eager, foreign service officer detailed as a USOM man on his first tour overseas... There is a rural affairs USOM representative in each province. Holbrooke is from Ba Xuyen... We are in Saigon to get help from the many civilian agencies that are in a position to help us. We are actually pioneering in a new approach to the problem. I hope someone will give us what we need. (The approach is really not new - we are just putting an old approach into practice.)"

February 9: "Big meeting yesterday. One thing about our plan - there is a lot of talking going on. It is the only way in which we can get understanding of the concept... But it is very important and the only way for us to save Vietnam, in my opinion. The troubles over here are very basic and we are going to try to solve them in a very simple, basic, way - by starting where the people are - in the small hamlets. First we give them protection - then we make their government at the hamlet level work for them.

"Protection is important - perhaps the first prerequisite. The Viet Cong come in and terrorize the hamlet officials - threaten them with assassination if they continue to serve. Then they do kill them - or enough of them to make their threats believable. One fine village chief was murdered four days ago - a very good man whom we had been relying on to recruit more militia in his area. The communist movement feeds on this sort of tactic - combined with promises of a better life to the peasants and a way of achieving the fanaticism and dedication among its cadres and workers that we do not yet understand.
"Our hope is to offer the farmer hope in two ways - protection, and a better deal for the little guy. The national government is not yet sure what its program will be. We intend to start a program of our own down here - write it into our lesson plans that we are preparing for the courses we will conduct and deliver on the program in our execution of the oil spot concept - and hope that the government will allow us to do so. It is not an easy thing to do. But we have a lot of Americans backing us and I think it will develop into something very good if we are lucky. I say again - there is no other way in my opinion for us to pacify his country.
"... I am trying to put a working organization together to turn over to my successor. When he comes then he will have to execute a plan put together by someone else, but it will be a good plan, with very good people making it go."

<u>February 12</u>: "We had a large meeting yesterday at which we really reviewed our plans in detail, revised them, improved them, and got them agreed to by the important members of the U.S. country team... We hope to be able to take the plans to Saigon for review and approval of the 21st Division conducting them as a test - in the entire 42nd Division Tactical Zone."

<u>February 17</u>: "Today we put our plan in final shape for the division commander to brief the corps commander and staff. Our proposal is that we then go to Saigon and brief the government as well as the US side, and obtain approval for us to test the plan in the 42nd tactical zone."

<u>February 19</u>: "Our big problem now is training. Can we get it organized so that we can train our pacification groups locally? Takes lots of good people to set up a traveling training team, to each district. But that is what we are shooting for."

<u>February 20</u>: "The division commander spent last night at Dong Xuyen, where he was with General Khanh, the new prime minister. The prime minister was pleased with our plan and we got the go-ahead from him - except that he said he would consider the money problem with his various ministries. The money problem is the pay of the five-man cadre teams that go into the hamlet and convert the people. The pay that is now being offered is barely subsistence, and actually less than the common laborer... However, it is not money alone that will make these people work for that cause - we all know that. The tough problem is to make the workers believe that the cause is worth their effort - to get conviction and dedication out of them,
"We are about ready to start training the first cadre - on Monday (February 24). We do not yet know how it will go - the whole plan is filled with uncertainties, problem areas, doubts, etc. But we will push ahead - believing that this is the best that we can do, and it

has chance of success if done right... Today I will go to Soc Trang and talk money... Bob Montague is in Saigon - been there since day before yesterday - and trying to get support for us there. He will be back today and join us in Soc Trang."

February 23 (Sunday): "We spent Friday afternoon with General Stilwell... and yesterday we briefed General Timmes on our plan and its requirements. The generals seemed to be interested and we hope that they will make it possible for us to get permission to do the things you must do in order for the plan to succeed. We have actually turned out at this level a comprehensive and integrated pacification plan for one division - and it is I think unique... The Vietnamese are interested too, and have begun to look on this as a ray of hope.
"The big problem is for this government to get a message of hope and promise across to the people... with the specific program of reform that will stir the people's enthusiasm. That is the missing ingredient in the picture over here, and until that comes through we will be in trouble with the people."

Meanwhile the command structure in Saigon had changed. Lieutenant General William C. Westmoreland arrived in early January, presumed by all to be the replacement for General Harkins, COMUSMACV. It would be June before the change of command occurred. Meanwhile he became the Deputy COMUSMACV.

February 24: "Today we will have a visit by General Westmoreland... We will explain our plan to General Westmoreland, and hope that he will agree with what we say we need and will carry the message back to Saigon so that we can get what we need."

February 25: "Successful day yesterday. We impressed General Westmoreland with the quality of our plan and the thinking that went into it. Whether he will be able to gain approval of his financial features - we don't know."

February 27: "Putting this thing together has been one of the most interesting things I have ever done. We are making headway in getting our concept accepted. The main reason is that is a very sound plan, put together after all the necessary discussion, with a fine staff working on it, and with enough flexibility that we can adjust as we go along. There is a reason for every part of the plan. The reason may not be good enough to satisfy every questioner, but it is plausible and fits in with the overall plan. Our answers to questions indicated that we have thought through the requirements and arguments - and ours is an integrated plan.
"Bob Montague has been absolutely invaluable in working this thing out. Jim Donahue, my G3 advisor. likewise. They are the pillars of my staff. Ed Mehosky, my other deputy, is also a tower of strength in handling the things that have to be done and that I can't possibly find time to do."

February 28: "Our pacification plan steps off at 0800 on Monday 2 March, with the beginning of training of the first cadres. We are ready to go. Lots of obstacles to get over, and some foot dragging among the key officials. But we think it has a chance."

March 4: "We will have more visitors down tomorrow to hear all about our plan. The top man of AID in the country, Mr. Brent of USOM - the top USIS man in the country, a Mr. Zorthian, or something like that - and a couple more people. We are getting some notoriety. Tomorrow afternoon we go to Can Tho to brief a big team that has been sent down by I Corps advisory group in Da Nang, to hear all about our approach to the problem.
"I hope this thing works out in actual practice. We have so much depending on the Vietnamese - we can only help to set it up. If they want to save their country, they can do it. But we can't do anything more than help them get organized. They have to breathe life into the clay and make it live.
"My counterpart seems to want to do that. Others the same way. They need from above a sense of the urgency of the situation, plus absolutely unselfish dedication to getting down those things that must be done."

March 6: "The briefing went off pretty well - they had the enthusiastic reaction that we have gotten from most people. We have briefed all the important people on the U.S. side except Harkins and Lodge. We expect that we will brief Mr, McNamara when he comes, as well. We need now to get some sign of enthusiasm from the Vietnamese authorities. The new corps commander, General Duc, will visit here this afternoon and will hear our plan.
"We seem to be bucking the tide, however. Our approach is different from what is evolving in Saigon. We set up a different chain of command, and we change some of the established relationships and pay scales. So some are not ready to say go ahead - especially Vietnamese. It could easily happen that we will not be able, through lethargy and disnterest on the higher Vietnamese levels, to go through with our scheme. So be it, if that happens. We have done what we could."

March 11: "We had a visit by McNamara and company. Apparently the real purpose of the visit was not to find out what we're doing, but rather to be seen by and to see the people - especially for McNamara and Taylor to give clear evidence that the United States is supporting the Vietnamese government and General Khanh without reservation.
"This will not be a simple war to win - not won by touring the provinces and whipping up enthusiasm. But won by simple hard work - grubby, mean, detailed laborious work. Out in the countryside where the people are - by cadres that take it seriously and are willing to sacrifice, and who have been given something to sacrifice for."

March 20: "We had a good visit from General Timmes yesterday and the day before. He liked what he saw. And well he might have. We have a good operation going down here. Wherever we went, they were good things going on and better things being planned. He gave a very nice talk to my officers and men, and told them that everyone's eyes were on them, with this new pacification plan. That is true, and we don't mind, if we are given the necessary support.
"We will start training our second group of leaders on Monday. At the same time we will be completely revising our instruction for next week, and getting ready to wind up the last week of instruction for the first group. We will have to keep four balls in the air at the same time, and I have reinforced my effort to ensure success.

March 23: "We will start instruction today for our second cycle of pacification forces. These people when finished training will be deployed alongside the first group to the east of Bac Lieu, in about a month. There has been a good deal of activity to the east of Bac Lieu lately, and we can expect that our first oil spot expansion will be of considerable interest to the Viet Cong and that they will react in due course."

Together with Colonel Hon and his people, by late March we had come up with this:

The 21st Division with US advisors' help has created its own "clear and hold" approach. Joint planners have developed a civil-military organization that along with a standard operating method will be put into place by the district chief in every district in the 21st Division zone.

The 21st Division will continue to seek out and eliminate the enemy throughout the DTA. However, support of this clear and hold activity will be the division's primary function.

The first requirement is to provide security to the hamlet population. At the same time there must be a civil effort to provide good government and win the hearts and minds of the people.

The province, with the district chief, will select a hamlet adjacent to a "blue" area to expand an "oil spot." To do so the district chief will use a military-civil pacification force. The military part will be a civil guard company and two or three self defense corps platoons under his direct command. Their mission will be to provide local security for the village and the operations of the pacification effort.

The pacification effort will be the task of a civil-military organization under an ARVN captain known as the district chief's "deputy in the field." This deputy will work with and assist the village chief and village council in the targeted area who would in turn direct the affairs of the hamlets and their hamlet militia. These latter are farmers by day and fighters by night.

The deputy in the field runs the pacification group; it is the key. It is under a competent militia officer or a village action cadreman especially selected for his leadership qualities and his love of country. He and his cadre will supervise hamlet action teams, whose members have expertise in fields like agriculture, medicine, education, and animal husbandry -- all supported by government agencies at district or above.

These teams will go into the target hamlet, determine the people's needs, assist in agricultural and economic development, establish intelligence nets, detect and eliminate Viet Cong infrastructure, act as a link between higher governmental agencies and the people, and eventually restore the legitimate government in the hamlet.

It would soon be time for me to go home.

The 21st Division advisory team had shown the newly arrived General Westmoreland the right approach to regaining control of South Vietnam's countryside. But, as I wrote to my wife, "General Westmoreland appeared interested but he gave the impression that his mind was on something else. I was not sure that he really understood the significance of what we were trying to do." By now we knew that he had neither grasped it nor vigorously followed up on it.

On March 16 I wrote Nancy: "Before I leave I will ask for an audience with General Westmoreland and tell him a few concrete suggestions as to how we can do this job better over here. I am sure he will be delighted to hear all about it!"

I called General Westmoreland's office to say that I wanted to talk to him before leaving Vietnam. He told me that his schedule was busy, but invited me to accompany him as he drove to Tan Son Nhut to welcome visiting National War College students

In the car, letting General Westmoreland know of my belief that we had come up with the solution to pacification, I said that if he could find the right thirteen senior advisers to put in charge of the advisory effort of the four ARVN corps and the nine ARVN divisions, and that if they put into place something like what we were now doing in the 21st Division, he could win back the countryside.

I told General Westmoreland that the thirteen advisors should each be assigned for a two-year tour and that they should have their families stationed at Clark Field in the Philippines if they desired. I said all of this expecting that General Westmoreland might well ask me to extend my own tour. I knew that I was taking that chance. I had not prepared my reply. It was a reckless move. He listened and that was it. No reaction, no questions, no exploration, no curiosity.

I believed that our effort as organized and directed and as it was being carried out was a unique and valuable experiment in pacification of the countryside. I still believe that if its worth had then been recognized and if it had been vigorously adopted nationwide, as it should have been, the resulting change in strategy would have made a positive difference in the war. General Westmoreland in 1967 did finally put into place the CORDS organization with its concepts of pacification and he supported it. But that was too late.

<u>En route to Saigon, Tuesday am, April 7</u>: "My last L-19 ride in Vietnam. At 8:05, thirty minutes ago, I left Bac Lieu.

"It was a good day yesterday. They were genuinely sorry to see me go. The 'pacification training team,' US and Vietnamese, had a little reception for me. Colonel and Mrs Hon had me for supper. The affair was very nice - good feeling all around. They gave me some souvenirs.

"The troops were all out this morning at the airfield - and the L-19 detachment of three ships made a fly-by as I got there - a low pass in formation over the field - trailing colored smoke and splitting in three directors after going by. Terrific.

"I have a very good feeling as I leave - ready to go - job in good shape and in good hands. Good friends left behind."

April 8: "My plane is due to leave at 1000 tomorrow... Saw Gen Westmoreland and Gen Harkins this morning. Timmes and Oden yesterday. This pm I get my passport."

That was my last letter. I left the next day.

INTERVIEWER: What was distinctive about your method?

GENERAL CUSHMAN: One, it had a well thought out civil-military organization and doctrine. Much of it was copied from the enemy, but ours would be a better deal for the citizen. It would be uniform in every district. A key feature was the pacification group's broad membership. After its members were trained according to its doctrine it would be deployed into the target hamlet where it was supervised by leaders who had also been trained in that doctrine. The pacification group was supported by military force sufficient to insure security and by the full range of government agencies most of which were represented in the pacification group.

Two, the division commander took responsibility for, and supervised, province pacification. Colonel Hon and I believed that the comprehensive nature of the effort required that the division commander have influence in the civil side of pacification. This was not the case elsewhere in Vietnam. Corps headquarters normally commanded a province chief and supervised his civil functions. Only when acting as the military "sector commander" did the province chief come under division. This situation did not materially change with CORDS.

Three, we did not try to rush the process. We aimed to take our time and to do it well one hamlet at a time.

INTERVIEWER: Was the Government of Vietnam then capable of putting such a program into effect?

GENERAL CUSHMAN: No, but I thought it could be made capable. I thought that by US influence at every level it could be motivated to become so. I was not so naive as to think this would be easy. A requirement would be the GVN's adoption of a land reform that would give the local farmers the fields that they were working and thereby something to fight for.

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The first trained pacification group began operating in early April 1964. By the end of May a pacification group was operating in each province.

On June 8, 1964, I read in the in the Washington Star a piece with a byline of Jim Lucas of Scripps-Howard. He had visited the district town of O Min in Phong Dinh province:

"Nguyen Van Dieu, 45, the father of six children ranging from six to 21 **i**n *age, is a little old to be enlisting in a war. But Mr. Dieu has joined a village action team as part of Vietnam's 'oil spot" pacification program. He was a member of the first class to complete the three week course...*

Nguyen Van Dieu will lead a hamlet action team. It will follow the civil guard after it has driven the Viet Cong from a hamlet and will attempt to reestablish local government...

Until now, he says, the hamlets have had no protection. If the pacification plan works out, they will..."

Colonel Hon and my successor as division senior advisor continued with the program. Bob Montague kept me informed by mail until he was transferred to Saigon to work on pacification, as was Dick Holbrooke. In 1965 Bob went to the Army War College and after that to work under Bob Komer in the Johnson White House. There he was joined by Dick Holbrooke to develop with Komer the program known as CORDS. In 1967 CORDS was put into place in Vietnam under Komer as the Deputy to COMUSMACV with rank as ambassador. Bob Montague was his assistant. In 1967 Vietnam's president Nguyen Van Thieu appointed Cao Hao Hon, who had been our division commander and was now a major general, to work alongside Ambassador Komer as chief of his government's nationwide pacification effort.

CORDS was a Cadillac version of our Model T effort of 1964. Tet 1968 hit just as CORDS got rolling. After that the United States grew increasingly oriented to getting out.

<u>INTERVIEWER</u>: What was your impression when you left Vietnam in April of 1964?

<u>GENERAL CUSHMAN</u>: I was consumed by Vietnam. I believed that I understood that situation. In a big roll I had brought back copies of the flip charts that Bob Montague built to brief visitors to the division and to our advisory team. They described in detail the oil spot pacification scheme that the division with our help had developed and employed. While waiting to attend the National War College, I used those charts to brief people at OSD and the CIA. I went up to West Point and briefed the cadets. I briefed at Forts Benning and Bragg.

I briefed LTG Harold K. Johnson, the Army DCSOPS. For about an hour I told him our story. When I finished his main point to me was, "You know what we have to do to solve this problem in Vietnam? We have to build a command post down in the basement of the Pentagon where we can plot every platoon and every company and plot out the Vietnam situation in detail." I said, "General, even at the 21st Division we didn't keep that kind of detail. I don't see how you can keep that kind of detail in the Pentagon." He said, "That's what McNamara requires."

This was May 1964. If General Johnson had been perceptive he would have said to me. "You have just described the strategy for success in Vietnam's countryside." He would have bought the whole concept right then. He would have had me briefing everywhere.

He did not. Two years later he sponsored a massive study called PROVN[1] (Program for the Pacification and Long-Term Development of South Vietnam} which said essentially the same thing that I had been saying. He missed a huge opportunity. We had the essentials of PROVN in April 1964.

I spent much of that time writing an article intended for Army magazine. It would tell the full and detailed story of what we had done in the 21st Division. In those days I thought it was important information to put out. I had the world's worst time getting the piece cleared by the Public Affairs people in OSD. I had written the harsh truth; they insisted on softer words. I still have a copy of my original piece. On it are their plentiful remarks in red. They even excised some of my words or phrases with scissors.

In the 1980s, after I had retired, I was approached by the writer Harry Maurer. He was writing a book of oral histories of people who had served in Vietnam. At my home in Bronxville, NY, he interviewed me at length. This is from page 116 of Strange Ground: Americans in Vietnam 1945-1975, An Oral History:

"I could not get it cleared. There was nothing classified about it, but it was sensitive. It was bad news. The Office of the Secretary of Defense wouldn't clear it. They allowed it to be sent to the war colleges and put in the libraries there, but it couldn't be published. Finally it was cleared. With certain changes. For example, my article started out, 'The central problem in South Vietnam is that the Viet Cong insurgents are in control of vital areas of the countryside.' They changed it to, 'A thorny problem in South Vietnam is the Viet Cong control over parts of the countryside.' From their way of phrasing it sounds like a nagging little itch you've got there. You're dying of cancer, and they say you've got hemorrhoids. I wrote, 'When I arrived in July of 1963 and when I left in April 1964, the Viet Cong government was the dominant force in the majority of the countryside.' They said '... the Viet Cong government appeared to have control of vital areas of the countryside.' Appeared!"

Titled "Pacification: Concepts Developed in the Field by the RVN 21st Infantry Division," my article was published by Army magazine in March 1966.

INTERVIEWER: How would you assess your experience with the 21st ARVN Division?

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[1] From Program for the Pacification and Long-Term Development of South Vietnam (PROVN) March, 1966:

"PROVN examines the situation in South Vietnam within the context of history and in broad perspective. Specific problems of pacification and long-term development are identified, and specific actions are proposed to alleviate them. The ultimate objective; a free and independent, non-communist nation...

"The United States must restructure, better manage and integrate its support effort; provide positive political guidance, under provisos for applying leverage and constraints; redirect the Republic of Vietnam-Free World military effort to achieve greater security; focus nonmilitary assistance to achieve cohesion within the Vietnamese society; and, orient socio-economic programs to exploit the critical geographic areas population and resource concentration...

"PROVN submits that the United States and the Republic of Vietnam must accept the principle that success will be the sum of innumerable, small and integrated localized efforts and not the outcome of any short-duration, single master stroke..."

GENERAL CUSHMAN: It was tremendously valuable to me. I remember writing to my wife late in my tour that I had shown myself capable of taking on a complex and difficult situation and successfully achieving results.

In my last weeks, on a visit to Saigon, I had found in a bookstore a copy of Mao Tse Tung's Selected Writings, his "Red Book." In it I read, "What we can ask for is generals... who combine wisdom with courage. To become both wise and courageous one must acquire a method."

Mao wrote: "Why are subjective mistakes made? Because... subjective direction does not correspond to, or is at variance with, the objective conditions... Here the crux it is to bring the subjective and objective into proper correspondence with each other."

To me that meant "Understand the situation; if you don't understand the situation, anything that you do will be right only by accident."

That was the fundamental lesson I learned from my first tour in Vietnam.

Chapter Fifteen, At the National War College

INTERVIEWER: Please describe your selection and attendance at the National War College.

GEN CUSHMAN: In February 1964, when I was in Vietnam as a senior advisor to the 21st ARVN Division, I received a letter from my wife. She wrote that Cyrus Vance had called to tell her that I was on the list for promotion to colonel. He congratulated Nancy and said, "Besides that, he is going to the National War College." That is how I found out about it.

I got back from Vietnam in April of 1964. The National War College class didn't start until early August. I arranged to get about sixty hours of helicopter flying time at Fort Rucker. I was taking more advanced training, landings in difficult spots, flying cross country.

INTERVIEWER: The Army had a critical shortage of pilots then. Did you ever consider requesting command of an aviation unit?

GEN CUSHMAN: No. I wanted to be an aviator but not in that career slot.

INTERVIEWER: How did you take to flying helicopters?

GEN CUSHMAN: I liked it. I was a good pilot.

INTERVIEWER: What made you a good pilot?

GEN CUSHMAN: Manual dexterity and a sense of where I was. I wasn't the best but I was qualified. I wasn't all that great at the maintenance end of things. I didn't really understand all that I could have about the mechanical functioning of a helicopter, but I could fly one.

INTERVIEWER: Did you enjoy flying?

GEN CUSHMAN: Yes. Very much.

INTERVIEWER: What did you do other than go to Fort Rucker?

GEN CUSHMAN: As I have described, I briefed people around Washington on the pacification scheme that we developed and employed with the 21st Division. I had brought back the roll of linen flip charts that Bob Montague had built and that we had used to brief visitors. I briefed Harold K. Johnson, who was the DCSOPS of the Army, I briefed CIA people and I went up to West Point and briefed the cadets. I briefed at Fort Benning and Fort Bragg.

INTERVIEWER: What was the purpose of your briefings?

GEN CUSHMAN: I wanted to inform people. I came back from Vietnam convinced that I understood the situation there. These were new pacification ideas that had not been circulated.

INTERVIEWER: How did you get to see the DCSOPS?

GEN CUSHMAN: I called his exec. I said, "I've just come back from Vietnam and I have a briefing that I think General Johnson would be interested in." He said, "Come on down." So I brought my charts into the Pentagon and briefed him. I was there for about an hour. It was a very comprehensive briefing. It told the whole story. At the end of it he said, "You know what we have to do to solve this problem in Vietnam? We have to build a command post down in the basement of the Pentagon where we can plot every platoon and every company and plot out the Vietnam situation in detail." I said, "General, even at the 21st Division we didn't keep that kind of detail. I don't see how you can keep that kind of detail in the Pentagon." He said, "That's what McNamara requires."

This was May 1964. As I have said, if General Johnson had been perceptive he would have said to me. "You have just described the strategy for success in Vietnam's countryside." He would have bought the concept right then. He should have had me briefing everywhere. He did not. Eighteen months later he sponsored a massive study called PROVN which said essentially the same thing that I had been saying.[2]

He missed a huge opportunity. We had the essentials of PROVN in April 1964.

INTERVIEWER: Who else did you brief?

GEN CUSHMAN: I briefed Vance, who by that time was Deputy Secretary of Defense to Robert McNamara.

INTERVIEWER: What reaction did you receive?

GEN CUSHMAN: They thought it was worthwhile. I don't think that they took any particular action.

INTERVIEWER: When did you conduct these briefings

GEN CUSHMAN: In April to July. And I have told you that I also decided to write an article. I took some time with it, some 24 pages with a couple of diagrams. I sent the article to the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, for review. I finally got it cleared in December of 1965. I have the original copy with portions that the censors cut out with razor blades. It was titled, "Pacification; Concepts Developed in the Field by the RVN 21st Infantry Division." It was published in the March 1966 edition of Army Magazine.

[2] See footnote page 14-18, Chapter 14

INTERVIEWER: The censors blocked your observations that the insurgents were in control of large parts of the countryside. Were you troubled that this was censored?

GEN CUSHMAN: What troubled me was the obvious reluctance to admit the truth.

INTERVIEWER: What did you ascribe this reluctance to?

GEN CUSHMAN: Fear of looking bad, lack of honesty, lack of forthrightness. The Viet Cong government was the dominant force in the majority of the countryside and that was the truth.

INTERVIEWER: Did you take any leave before you reported to Fort McNair?

GEN CUSHMAN: I took the family to Sullivan's Island, SC, and visited my mother and father.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have any problem reintroducing yourself to your children?

GEN CUSHMAN: When I returned from Vietnam, I took a taxi to Chevy Chase. My family didn't know what plane I would be on but they knew I was coming home. I arrived in the morning and found a big flag made out of a bed sheet hanging from a second story window. It read, "Welcome Home Daddy." My daughter Anne was born three months before I left for Vietnam so she was 15 months old when I returned. She did not know who I was and it was a while before she called me Daddy. The other children had grown up over the year and they were glad to see me. We had a great reunion. My wife had survived. I don't know how. Here's a lady with a big family and a new baby. Her husband's been off for a year and she's got the house and seven children to take care of and somehow she got through that remarkably well.

INTERVIEWER: So you're at the National War College.

GEN CUSHMAN: So here I am as a student at the National War College with these ideas on the war in Vietnam and on counterinsurgency. It was an interesting course. We were in seminars of about fifteen officers of all Services and a few civilians. We would read assigned material and then have discussions. They had good guest speakers. As an example, after the February 1965 Viet Cong attack on a US advisory compound in Pleiku that killed nine Americans, Walt Rostow, President Johnson's national security advisor spoke to us. He said that the purpose of Johnson's reprisal bombings of North Vietnam was to "send Hanoi a message." This later grew into a bombing campaign called Rolling Thunder.

It was a good course. I was sounding off my views on Vietnam.

INTERVIEWER: How many other uniformed people had been in Vietnam besides you?

GEN CUSHMAN: Only a few. I had just recently returned so I was fresh from the field.

INTERVIEWER: What was the dominant view of the Vietnam War?

GEN CUSHMAN: When I got there in August the Vietnamese government was in upheaval. There had been a series of coups. Things were deteriorating in the countryside. Battalions of the ARVN were being ambushed and beat up by main force Viet Cong. The situation was going down hill fast. Some people thought that it was getting so bad that we would have to send in American combat forces. There was talk about that. LBJ refused to consider sending combat forces into Vietnam during the 1964 election season. Barry Goldwater was his opponent.

In my view there were two problems in Vietnam; one, the instability in the countryside, and two, the reinforcements being received by the Viet Cong from outside South Vietnam. I was convinced of that long before I went to the War College. I decided that those were the two fundamental problems that had to be addressed. I said to my classmates and the faculty, "The countryside is no place for American troops. They are not going to be able to tell friend from foe."

My experience advising the ARVN led me to believe that we could get Vietnamese troops to fight the Viet Cong. I thought that the best use of American resources would be to stop the infiltration of reinforcements into the South. Some supplies were coming through Cambodia. A small amount came in over the beaches. Most reinforcements and materiel were coming down the Ho Chi Minh Trail and entering through the Northern provinces. I believed that I had the solution to pacifying the countryside. I began to study the problem of infiltration.

Each student was required to write an individual research paper. So I set out to explore this problem. I wanted to both stop infiltration and pacify the countryside. I said, "We've got a house, the roof is leaking and the place is flooding. We've got to both mop the floor and repair the roof. We can't just keep mopping the floor when the roof is leaking." It does no good to mop up insurgents if we don't also seal off their avenues of reinforcement and supply.

I began to consider historical examples of counterinsurgency. An office in northwest Washington connected to the Pentagon was keeping a library of them. I compiled a list of recent cases in which established governments had coped successfully with an insurgency (Burma, Greece, Hungary, Korea, Malaya, the Philippines and Tibet) and a list of those in which the insurgents were successful (Algeria, [a draw]. China, Cuba, Indochina, Indonesia, Israel, and Laos). There were seven of each type.

For each case I wrote a one-page paper describing the government's internal measures compared to the effort being made by the opposition, grading it on a scale of 1 to 10. For each case, on the same 1-10 scale, I determined the degree to which the insurgents did not receive outside support.

When I plotted all fourteen insurgencies on graph paper the successful counterinsurgencies were grouped in the upper right, "7" or more in both dimensions. I plotted that as a "zone of success." I then gave my assessment of the situation in South Vietnam: it was down in the lower left at about a "3". I said, "You're not going to have a successful counter-insurgency until you solve both problems. The zone of success is up here and the situation in Vietnam is down here. I thought that portrayal might have appealed to the systems analysts in the crowd.

I derived this general principle that I put in my paper:

In order for a counterinsurgency to succeed, there must be both an internal effort substantially superior to that of the insurgents, and an effective restriction of (or an absence of} external support to the insurgents. Neither action alone is sufficient to success. Both are necessary.

That simple operations analysis with its profound truth was an appendix to my individual research paper, which I titled: External Support of the Viet Cong: An Analysis and a Proposal. Originally classified TOP SECRET, my paper has been downgraded to unclassified by the National War College and is now in the National Defense College library.

I had become convinced that a satisfactory conclusion in Vietnam was not possible if the Ho Chi Minh trail were allowed to exist. I thought that there had to be some way to use the great military capability of the United States to solve this problem. I thought air mobility could supply part of the answer. I had been following the evolution of air mobility in the Army for years and especially since the approval of the recommendations of the Howze Board in 1963 as I left for Vietnam.

While at the National War College I kept abreast of the continued development of the 11th Air Assault Division. Employment of that division was a key element of my paper. I thought we could use it as a spearhead for seizing positions on the Ho Chi Minh Trail. This was the main thesis of my paper.

<u>INTERVIEWER</u>: Your plan was to use the 173d Airborne Brigade (Okinawa), the 25th Infantry Division (Hawaii) and the 11th Air Assault Division under the ruse of a large scale exercise.

<u>GEN CUSHMAN</u>: I thought that the force to seize and establish the blocking positions on the Ho Chi Minh Trail must be a coalition force, including Vietnamese troops. My proposed plan included a deception plan. A Southeast Asia Treaty Organization field exercise in Thailand would be the stated reason for massing forces in-theater. After its assembly that force would launch the trail cutting operation.

I presented a series of maps that showed the growth of North Vietnamese control of Laos territory so that, in 1965, it extended along South Vietnam's border almost to Cambodia.

Coalition partners would justify their action by citing North Vietnam's operations in Laos since 1961 to seize the trails territory as flagrant violations of the 1954 Geneva Accords[3].

I offered a US political-military approach that combined power with a statement of our position that aimed at convincing China that it would be unwise to intervene in this defensive blocking action.

I looked at the ground. It was jungle territory. In 1965 people questioned whether American forces could survive and fight in that kind of jungle. I thought that they could and that with bulldozers and a major engineer effort positions could be built and fields of fire cleared to establish blocking positions that could be held and from which operations could be conducted to deny enemy use of routes. I made the best terrain analysis that I could based on the available maps. I determined that my planned multinational, multidivision joint force could do the job.

I also described how US forces available at end-1964 were substantially greater than those available at end-1960 during the Laos crisis. For example, we had in 1965: 1,119 UH-1 and 71 CH 47 helicopters on hand compared to only a handful in 1961. We had 139 Army CV-2B Caribou aircraft and 682 Air Force C-130 cargo aircraft, compared to zero Caribou and 264 C-130s in 1961's inventory. Secretary McNamara had in four years more than doubled the Air Force's and Navy's tactical air capabilities. So I thought that adequate force was available.

After the 1964 election someone at OSD got hold of me on the telephone wanting to know more about my idea of cutting the Ho Chi Minh trail and using the 11th Air Assault Division. He said, "Tell me more about this division." I sensed that they were thinking of deploying the division and using it in the countryside. I said, "Don't use this outfit that way. It will just tear up the countryside and they won't be able to tell friend from foe. It is not the proper mission. This unit should be assigned to seize and secure terrain interdicting the infiltration routes."

US war managers had long recognized the need to curtail infiltration down the Ho Chi Minh trail. A variety of measures had been considered, among them the use of US and indigenous special operations forces to attack the lines of infiltration. The bombardment campaign known as Rolling Thunder, initiated in early 1965, was later directed at attacking the Ho Chi Minh trail. It was augmented by ground and airborne sensors deployed for target acquisition. This was the famous "McNamara Line." None of these schemes worked. The trail eventually became a veritable highway that doomed any possibility of success in our effort in Vietnam.

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[3] Text: "Final declaration, dated July 21, 1954, of the Geneva Conference on the problem of restoring peace in Indochina, in which the representatives of Cambodia, the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam, France, Laos, the People's Republic of China, the State of Viet-Nam, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Kingdom and the United States of America took part...

12. In their relations with Cambodia, Laos, and Viet-Nam, each member of the Geneva Conference undertakes to respect the sovereignty, the independence, the unity, and the territorial integrity of the above-mentioned states, and to refrain from any interference in their internal affairs."

As I undertook my thesis I was not aware of a specific proposal offered by anyone to block the Ho Chi Minh trail with troops. My paper proposed a feasibility study and offered one tactical scheme.

In time my notion was overtaken by events. In April 1965 a battalion of US Marines landed at Da Nang. That June President Johnson gave General Westmoreland the authority to commit American troops to ground combat operations in Vietnam. Later that year the 11th Air Assault Division, now known as the 1st Air Cavalry Division,[4] was deployed to Vietnam and committed into its countryside, as was the 1st Brigade of the 101st Airborne Division.

Years later, in the 1980s and 1990s, I presented my idea at various symposia as having had merit as a possible solution to the problem. Some people commented that it would never have worked, for various reasons. I'm not sure. I believed that a plan should have been developed and tested as a feasibility study.

In 1984 General Bruce Palmer, who was the Vice Chief of Staff under Westmoreland, came out with a book "The 25-Year War: America's Military Role in Vietnam" in which he said we should have done something to this early in the war. I took some comfort from the fact that he and others had the same idea, although he didn't phrase it in quite my terms.

All this was an articulation of my fundamental belief that you had to do something to stop the infiltration. This was in late 1964, early 1965. In August 1964 the Congress had overwhelmingly passed the Tonkin Gulf Resolution. He could exploit that. By early 1965, LBJ had won the election. He was free to take bigger steps in Vietnam.

INTERVIEWER: There was an internal problem and an external problem. The internal problem was the actual insurgency itself and the external problem was the flow of supplies and reinforcement coming into South Vietnam from the Communist North, through Laos and Cambodia.

GEN CUSHMAN: That was the basic formulation. When the war ended with the United States leaving Vietnam in defeat it gave me no pleasure to have my analysis proved right. We could not win without blocking the Ho Chi Minh trail.

INTERVIEWER: Was that the kind of thing that was being taught at the National War College at the time?

GEN CUSHMAN: No, that was original to me. When I wasn't in class, I spent most of my time on this paper. I worked in the classified section of the library. I would work up there

[4] That summer I visited Fort Benning where in Doughboy Stadium that division and its test units received the colors of the 1st Cavalry Division, which had been stationed in Korea. In Korea its colors were replaced by colors of Fort Benning's 2nd Infantry Division, some of whose units were redesignated as units of the 1st Cav. The 1st Cav then became the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile). It was also known as the 1st Air Cavalry Division.

between breaks and I would type away on my typewriter. My paper was selected for presentation to the entire class. I went up to the old Signal Corps repository in Long Island and I grabbed some combat footage and I got someone to help me weave the footage into my presentation along with my graphs and charts.

INTERVIEWER: What gave you the idea to jazz it up like that? Did you think it would be easier to sell that way?

GEN CUSHMAN: I thought it would make a bigger impression.

INTERVIEWER: Did Cushman the strategist ever consider whether Vietnam was worth the commitment of U.S. troops?

GEN CUSHMAN: Sure. I said the option presented in my paper should be made available as a serious possibility if Johnson decided to commit troops.

INTERVIEWER: In your plan what role would the U. S. Army have had in solving the internal insurgency?

GEN CUSHMAN: We would advise and assist the ARVN and province forces in the countryside.

INTERVIEWER: What else did you study at the National War College?

GEN CUSHMAN: World affairs. National and allied political-economic-military policy and strategy. It gave me an opportunity to rest, recharge my batteries, and work on some things that I like to do. I learned nothing at the National War College that helped prepare me for my next duty assignment with the 101st Airborne Division.

During the school year I wrote for ARMY magazine, mostly because I needed the money for my family. One article, titled "The Experimental Armored Force, 1927-28," told of the British Army's experiments with armored warfare in the 1920s. Brigadier J.F.C. Fuller, the writer B.H. Liddell Hart, and others were pressing the British to shift to mechanized warfare. It was deemed by many as a successful experiment. The British Army did nothing with it. The German Army observed the experiments with interest and it followed up all too well. Blitzkrieg was their product.

In earlier years I had amassed considerable documentation about the evolution of the Army and Navy air arms and controversies in roles and missions. I was historically well grounded and had developed my own ideas. Under the pen name "Pegasus" I wrote for ARMY magazine a series of three articles called the "40 Year Split." Published in July, August, and October 1965 they described the doctrinal evolution of the Army Air Corps/ Army Air Forces/US Air Forces from World War I to Vietnam. I will quote the first paragraphs of the first article, "The First Twenty Years: 1920-1940."

In 1919 the enthusiastic young airmen of the United States Army came home from the Great War. They had had only seven months of combat. Their small force had only dropped 136 tons of bombs. They had flown mostly in planes built by the French and the British. But this small band of pioneers had a vision of a radically new way to wage war.

With their return, there began the "forty-year split." This was the split that developed between those who fight on the land and those who fight in the air. The split widened during each succeeding decade and only now in the 1960s has it begun to mend.

On the one hand there were Army airmen who were convinced of the decisive value of air in an independent strategic bombardment role and who firmly believed that its use with the traditional surface forces was secondary.

On the other hand there was the non-flying Army who believed that bombardment was not decisive and that equal priority should be given to the development of the airplane to support the land Army.

During the 1920s and 1930s the split widened as reduced budgets forced decisions between the two points of view. At the end of the thirties, the airmen almost lost, then won their case.

During these four decades the split was to keep the United States from developing instruments of land-and-air warfare that exploit technology to the fullest possible degree. The story of the split has been often told and from several points of view. But today, as the United States faces the often agonizing problems of how and even when it can project its capacity for land combat in trouble spots worldwide, the broad outline the broad outline of the story needs to be re-examined.

If we in 1965 can see what this but is how it grew and what it has meant perhaps we can better understand what we have to do about it...

The second piece was "The Second Twenty Years: 1940-1960." The third piece was "The Healing Years: 1961-1965." It morphed into optimism citing the establishment of the US Strike Command', which pulled together under a single combatant commander all US-based Army and Air Force formations. It also cited air-ground progress in Vietnam.

These were not scholarly pieces. The history was good and the quotations were accurate, but they were not properly footnoted. Reading them nearly half a century later I do say that for 1965 they were a very good summary of the back and forth of air and land doctrine over the years. My life has been grounded in this kind of work.

INTERVIEWER: Why did you feel the need to use a pen name?

GEN CUSHMAN: I think it was because I did not want to offer myself as primarily a writer. I preferred that my reputation be that of a leader of troops who also knew his history and was comfortable with doctrine.

INTERVIEWER: What was your impression of the National War College?

GEN CUSHMAN: I liked getting to know all those people and those from other services. I was in a carpool with two civilians; one was from the Bureau of Internal Revenue and the other was a Foreign Service officer who later became an ambassador, Talcott Seelye [Ambassador Talcott Williams Seelye].

INTERVIEWER: Did you make any useful interpersonal connections at the National War College?

GEN CUSHMAN: No. I made friends but no useful personal connections.

INTERVIEWER: Did you feel you were a better strategic thinker as a result of the experience there?

GEN CUSHMAN: I suppose so. I really can't say. I don't know if I ever felt I was a really good strategic thinker on a broad canvas. I don't claim to be one.

INTERVIEWER: When did you learn that you were going to command a brigade in the 101st Airborne Division?

GEN CUSHMAN: I really wanted a brigade command as my next assignment. The assignment of colonels was under the Office of Personnel Operations. The officer who assigned colonels was in a converted World War II barracks right next to the National War College. About Christmastime I began to pester him weekly. He was on my side. I felt that he had my best interests at heart, and was trying his best to peddle me. But my last troop duty had been in 1953 and I did not have a resume that shouted Cushman is a hot candidate for brigade command. I was on the below the zone list for colonel. They were still working through the list so I was still a lieutenant colonel.

Finally he told me that the 101st Airborne Division at Fort Campbell had accepted me for a brigade command slot that would open up in 1966. Was I willing to wait in line for a brigade?

I said yes indeed I was. I arrived at the 101st Airborne Division in July of 1965.

Chapter Sixteen, At Fort Campbell 1965-67

INTERVIEWER: Please tell me about your arrival at the 101st Airborne Division.

GEN CUSHMAN: Our family, minus Connie who had a summer job in Hartford, CT, traveled by car from Chevy Chase, MD, to Sullivans Island, SC, for a vacation and a visit to my parents. In late July we arrived at Fort Campbell and moved into quarters in Drennan Park.

The post was quiet. The 101st's 1st Brigade had just departed for Vietnam. To find out about recreation for my children I went over to the Teen Club, an on-post hangout for teenagers. There that morning on the TV was President Johnson announcing that the 1st Cavalry Division and the 1st Brigade of the 101st Airborne Division were being sent to Vietnam. That was my introduction to Fort Campbell.

I reported in to the division commander, MG Powell [Major General Beverly E. Powell]. It was clear that there would be no brigade command vacancies any time soon. So they had to figure out what to do with me. The division commander was also the installation commander. He had a deputy installation commander and two assistant division commanders. His chief of staff was Colonel Stewart McKinney, who had until recently been the division artillery commander and who served General Powell in both his capacities. I was made McKinney's deputy chief of staff, with my duties to be on the post side.

General Powell's headquarters slots came from a TO&E division headquarters and a table of distribution for the garrison. At Colonel McKinney's suggestion I began a survey of the slots in the garrison TDA. This turned out to be a good way to learn about the division and Fort Campbell. I was able to identify a number of positions that could be eliminated.

BG Ward Ryan, for whom I had worked while on the CGSC faculty at Fort Leavenworth, was one assistant division commander. His wife Margaret, who in those days had corralled me to be secretary of the Dramatic Club, saw to it that I was put in charge of the Teen Club, in which she had an interest.

That August of 1965 the 101st Airborne Division Association was holding its 20th annual reunion right there at Fort Campbell. My wife Nancy and I attended the final banquet. General McAuliffe spoke. We were seated at a table with veterans of Normandy and Bastogne, twenty years or so distant. I thought to myself, where did they find such men as these. I could not have asked for a better indoctrination in what it meant to be a Screaming Eagle. I have recalled that experience again and again.

After a couple of months Colonel McKinney and General Powell called me in. By then I had been promoted to colonel. The division commander said, "Jack, I'm going to make you the Director of Consolidated Supply." I learned that the Army Audit Agency and the General Accounting Office had each recently conducted an audit of the supply system at Fort Campbell. Both had reported that it was in a shambles. I was to straighten it out.

While I would remain assigned to the division, my duty position would be that of Director of Supply, reporting to Colonel Hudson Hill, an old airborne type who was the Deputy Post Commander.

In 1953 I had been for a few weeks a regimental S4. I had twice been a company commander with a property book. Other than that I had had no supply experience. The division was organizing a contingent to go by military air to the annual meeting of the Association of the U.S. Army in Washington. I went along so that I could visit supply people in the Pentagon and learn something about installation supply. I found a civilian in DCSLOG [Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics] and I said, "I'm going to be a director of supply at Fort Campbell; tell me a little bit about supply. Give me a short education." He explained the difference between a due-in and a due-out. He informed me of such terminology as location, warehouse refusal, and reorder point. Returning, I arranged to be dropped off at Fort Knox, KY, so that I could visit that installation supply activity. Although it had not been automated, its director oriented me on how a manual system operated, using paper records to keep track of each item's status. He gave me a tour of his warehouse and some pointers on warehouse operation.

Returning in mid-October I learned that the sorry state of installation supply stemmed from four factors.

In 1961 the 101st division had gone from a Pentomic configuration with five battle groups of five companies each into a structure of three brigades, each with three battalions of three companies. Every company TO&E was new.

In 1962 the Army had done away with the technical services' supply functions and had consolidated them Into a new Army Materiel Command. Ordnance, Engineer, Quartermaster and other supply activities had been placed under a new Consolidated Supply system with "commodity managers." Materiel classes had been revised; items were given new stock numbers.

When the 1st Brigade was alerted for deployment a few months back, shortcuts were made to get the brigade's units ready. Property was transferred without proper receipts. Many of the property books of units left behind were in disarray.

While all this was going on orders had come down from Third Army to automate the supply records in Consolidated Supply. They had done so, complicating the problem by entering bad data.

The consolidated supply operation was run out of two big warehouses at the east end of the post. My office would be up the steps at the loading platform issue point. Next door was Mr Earl Allison, who had been the civilian director of Consolidated Supply, with some of his staff. He was now my deputy. Across the street was another warehouse with the property turn-in point, the clothing issue point and the punchcard room.

The punchcard room was a key feature. In it were four Univac 1004 computers, newly fielded by the computer industry. They would be my introduction to the computer and to a lifetime of learning about it. I learned that they were programmed by plugging wires into a board visible from behind. I now know that a Univac 1004's total memory was 961 characters, or 6 bits of core memory. Four ladies at their machines converted paper documents such as requisitions and issue slips to punch cards. Each evening the punch cards were taken to the installation data processing unit. A printout showing stock levels by item would be returned the following morning. It would be the basis for processing requests for issue that day.

The problem was that the printouts were grossly inaccurate; they did not match even closely what was in the warehouse. The situation was so bad that they had to put a field artillery battalion on special duty to run an inventory. They had soldiers in there counting everything so that we could bring the stockage data up to date.

The receiving warehouse was a big hanger-like space and it was stacked with stuff everywhere. It was chaotic. The situation was so bad that a requisition with the highest priority (UND or "urgency of need designator") was taking 45 days to fill. The standard was two days. The clerks' desks were piled high with paper. The whole place was a picture of disorganization.

INTERVIEWER: Did other divisions across the Army have the same problem?

GEN CUSHMAN: Our problems were not unique but they were very severe. Ours may have been the worst. The division was suffering. I took over the operation in early November of 1965. It was the best job I could have had at that stage of my life. Although it was all new to me it was a very straightforward management problem and I really got on top of the job. I must say that I proved to myself that I am a very good manager.

One of my prized possessions is an inch-thick document titled: Consolidated Supply, Fort Campbell, Kentucky, Project Trim, July 1966. This document was prepared as a "management improvement" submission to Headquarters, Third Army.

Its first two pages read "Presented to Colonel J. H. Cushman, Director of Supply 1 November 1965 - 8 July 1966, by the supervisors of Consolidated Supply in appreciation for his outstanding leadership." That was followed by about 40 signatures, of all of my people. I had come to know every one of them, solid citizens from the area surrounding Fort Campbell.

I remember holding an employees' meeting in the receiving warehouse. It was early November. The place was stacked high with items yet to be taken to storage locations. I said that we would have this floor completely cleared, holding there only current items with their receipts in process. I said that we would use the location for our Christmas Party.

Mr. Casebeer, receiving superintendent, spoke up, "What year?" That was the state of their disbelief.

I organized Operation Clean Out. From our piles of paperwork we assembled, and for return to each unit supply room, every request for issue. Realizing that many of them were duplicate requests submitted out of frustration at not having received the item, we instructed the supply sergeants to return only those that were valid, promising that they would be filled, and to submit a pile of cancellations on the others. To the supply depots we would cancel the latter and confirm the former.

On a chosen day the division band led a long parade of company supply sergeants from the troop line all the way down to Consolidated Supply where an Operation Clean Out banner was hung on a warehouse and where we received their valid requests and cancellations.

Because our orders to inventory control points at the depots were rife with error, we had to organize a similar purification to put the supply system on track. I won't go into the details of the SOP's that I set up, typing them our early in the morning in my quarters, to put Operation Clean Out into effect. The result was miraculous in the eyes of all.

The supply system uncongealed. Items began to flow in. Supply sergeants came to the issue point several times a day. After months of reporting their repair parts readiness at level four, the bottom, our companies were soon reporting it at a level one, filled. Vehicles down for repair began to get the repair parts they needed. Vehicles began to come off deadline. Unit readiness improved. The employees of Consolidated Supply looked on me as a messiah.

A broken supply operation had meant that nothing was working right. Rather than using the established turn-in point where excess equipment could be turned in for credit and taken off their books, supply sergeants were burying their excess out on the reservation. A properly working supply operation restored their faith in the system and made it possible to do everything according to regulation. It taught me an important lesson about the value of doing things right.

Another lesson was that you had to get the details right. One day I was in the receiving warehouse. A freight car had just pulled up to the rail-side unloading dock. The crew was unloading bales of the kind of cotton waste that mechanics use to clean parts and tools. The freight car contained a couple hundred bales of it. It turned out that the responsible supply clerk had not noticed that the unit of issue for that item had been changed from pounds to bales. The punch card clerk had missed it too, and the depot had shipped 200 bales, not 200 pounds. We sent it back.

INTERVIEWER: Did all this help in getting you a brigade command?

GEN CUSHMAN: When word came down that a separate infantry brigade was to be activated at Fort Campbell, I told the division commander that I expected to command that brigade. The former division chief of staff was still around, acting as a sort of assistant division commander. He was an old airborne type, years ahead of me at West Point, and he wanted command of that brigade.

INTERVIEWER: Had he ever commanded a brigade?

GEN CUSHMAN: No, but General Powell told me that the Army said this was going to be Cushman's brigade.

INTERVIEWER: This was an independent brigade combat team.

GEN CUSHMAN: Yes. It was to have organic artillery and engineers and so forth. I would be the brigade commander. I made plans. I figured out where the units of the brigade would be quartered. I learned which battalions would be in the brigade and got their unit histories. I worked with the Army heraldry people to design a brigade shoulder patch. That kept me busy. Then the Army decided not to activate that brigade at Fort Campbell after all. Meanwhile I was sent to a six week course, Management Program for Executives, at the University of Pittsburgh Business School.

Fort Campbell became very busy. The Army was forming new units to be sent to Vietnam as part of the buildup. TO&E equipment was pouring in for the units being activated. The supply activity had been straightened out just in time. The Army decided to establish a basic training center at Fort Campbell. This required the rehabilitation of blocks of empty World War Two barracks. A brigadier general and staff came in, along with BCT cadres.

INTERVIEWER: MG Ben Sternberg replaced General Powell.

GEN CUSHMAN: Yes. And when Stew McKinney departed, General Sternberg in due time made me his chief of staff. I took up that duty the first week of July 1966.

That week the G3 came into my office one morning and said, "Sir, we had visitors last night, an advance detail from the White House. It seems that President Johnson is going to visit here in three days. He wants to stage a Vietnam publicity event with the 101st Airborne Division. He wants a band. He wants to address a formation of troops. He wants to visit some wounded and to present some awards. He wants to see an air mobile demonstration and a parachute jump. He wants to tour an equipment display. Mrs. Johnson and their daughters will be here." The advance team told us to have an office prepared for the President's use in case he had business to do.

I reported all this to General Sternberg. A laid back sort of man, he told me to get busy. The first thing that I did was to call the chief of staff at Third Army. He asked me what we needed. I still have my notes of that phone call. The 101st band was not in the best shape; I told him we needed a band. He sent the Third Army band.

By then I knew well the division and post situation and capabilities. I spent a few minutes with the G3. Our mission and its tasks had just been provided. We came up with mission statement, concept of operations, tasks for the subordinate units, coordinating and administrative instructions, and command arrangements. I had already called a meeting of the chain of command. With my secretary taking dictation, I issued an oral operation order. She typed it up and the G3 took it from there. Operation Texas was launched. I still have a copy of that order. Ten years later, as Commandant at Leavenworth, I used it in teaching an elective on Advanced Staff Procedures, as an example of the value of a Leavenworth education.

The operation was a success. The President and his party arrived in Air Force One, preceded by a C-141 carrying his limousine. Everything went off without a hitch, including his speech to the assembled troops from a pavilion hastily built at Campbell Army Air Field. There was a moment of panic when it began to rain; a seam in the plywood roof over his lectern dripped water at the exact place where in ten minutes he would be standing. We quickly put a tarp over the spot. The airfield commander came out of it quite well. Although his office was never used by the President, its having been made available meant a new carpet and paint job.

That was in my first week on the job. That week we were also coping with a huge overrun on the barracks renovation that was in process for the Army basic training center to be established at Fort Campbell. Fort Campbell was responsible for that renovation. It involved the Mobile District of the Corps of Engineers. I had to work with my classmate Bob Wessells, the district engineer, and his people to prepare a briefing that would tell how the overrun had happened and what had to be done if we were to complete the work. It was some week.

I thoroughly enjoyed my year serving General Sternberg as his post and division chief of staff. He was on top of his job, but very relaxed about it. I was energetic and hard-working. I saw it as my responsibility to look after every aspect of his sphere of command, other than his immediate office.

General Sternberg had a deputy for each of his basic responsibilities. Brigadier General Salve Matheson was now the one assistant division commander; he had been in the 101st's 506th Parachute Infantry in World War II. Mike Pawlick, a senior brigadier general, ran the basic training center. Colonel Hudson Hill, a veteran of the airborne assault on Corregidor, was deputy post commander. I was a junior colonel, and newly airborne. From time to time I took it on myself, in what I thought was General Sternberg's best interest, to direct an action within the domains of his principal subordinates. It made for some interesting personal relationships, not to speak of occasional tensions.

INTERVIEWER: Did General Sternberg support you?

GEN CUSHMAN: He did. He never told me to lay off.

INTERVIEWER: How did you find directing the staff?

GEN CUSHMAN: It was manageable. I did OK, The staff was a combination of an installation and division staff. In each staff section the principal was from the division, the deputy was from the post TDA, and the rest of the section was mixed. We all thought that before long the division would be sent to Vietnam. I raised with General Sternberg the necessity for splitting the post and division staffs in preparation that eventuality. At Fort Lewis the 9th Division had deployed and they had to leave an installation staff behind. With his OK I went to Fort Lewis and reviewed their experience.

The year went by quickly. The Army was mobilizing for the Vietnam buildup. New units with their cadres were activated at Fort Campbell. They drew their equipment, received their fillers, trained for a while, and were shipped out to Vietnam. We had personnel and supply links with the 101st's 1st Brigade. We followed its fortunes in Vietnam. We received its wounded in our hospital and returned them to duty at Fort Campbell.

General Sternberg was an experienced G-1. I learned from him. I made it my business to master personnel administration. I developed a program that I called "Operation Excellence." It was a procedure for establishing an objective (such as "improve personnel administration"), for describing the current situation in detail objectively with all its shortfalls, and for coming up with the step-by-step series of actions required to make the situation right. Its final phase was follow-up to ensure that the required actions were taken. I had long since figured that the process of command first started with understanding the situation. I showed General Sternberg what I was doing toward a few objectives. He thought it was "splendid."

Already knowledgeable about the installation, I became adept at installation management. As director of the program and budget advisory committee (PBAC) I handled the details of moving money around the various installation accounts. I developed Fort Campbell's annual budget. As the end of FY 1967 approached we put Fort Campbell in a position, with contracts ready to let, to spend the extra money that Third Army wanted obligated at year's end. As I developed my understanding of installation management, I wrote about it. I was invited to speak on the subject at the Army Management School at Fort Belvoir.

INTERVIEWER: What kind of training was the division doing at that time?

GEN CUSHMAN: They were training for Vietnam. The division activated, equipped, and trained a battalion of the 506th Infantry that then deployed to Vietnam to join the 1st Brigade. We built an aggressor force patterned on the Viet Cong. We set up a "Vietnam village" out on the reservation.

INTERVIEWER: How involved were you in development of the division's training plans?

GEN CUSHMAN: I was not involved. The ADC took care of that. I was once asked to conduct an IG inspection of one of our infantry battalions. I hadn't been that close to soldiers since I left the 22nd Infantry in 1953. I went down there. The troops were in their barracks. The platoon sergeant reported to me. The soldiers had their foot lockers pre-

pared for inspection at the foot of their beds, with the lid open and the tray out. I lifted the tray of one locker and inspected the clothing inside. I lifted an undershirt and found that it had been folded over a piece of cardboard to make it look flat and unwrinkled. I asked, "What's that cardboard doing there?" The soldier answered that the platoon sergeant had told him to put it there. I said to the platoon sergeant, "We don't do that. We don't tell soldiers to do things that don't make sense. Some day you are going to have to tell that soldier to take a machine gun position. You want him to think well of your judgment." That experience told me that I still knew how to handle troops even though it had been years since I held a command.

Along comes June of 1967 and we get a new division commander named Barsanti [Major General Olinto Mark Barsanti]. I didn't know a thing about him. I found out that he commanded an infantry battalion in World War Two. He had commanded a regiment of the 9th Infantry Division during the Korean War. He came to the division from the Army Material Command in Washington. I decided that he probably could use an orientation so I put together a briefing and I went to Washington to brief him in his office.

INTERVIEWER: Was this on your own initiative?

GEN CUSHMAN: Yes. I called him and made the arrangements. Although I received a cool reception, he was interested. Judging by the questions he asked, I had the impression that he was going to be a stickler for doing things right.

He arrived at Fort Campbell on the 4th of July weekend and occupied the CG's quarters before I met or welcomed him. The CG's quarters were in an old farm house near the main gate. It had been bought as a part of the reservation during World War Two. It was close to Highway 41A and surrounded by trees. There was a piece of open ground across Fort Campbell's main entrance road where the Wives Club was having its annual fundraising carnival. They had all kinds of booths. A traveling circus was set up.

The night after General Barsanti moved in, some soldiers got drunk at this carnival. On leaving they walked down a row of trees, a former driveway, that led to his quarters and came up to his front porch. They didn't know where they were so they knocked on his door and there he was. That's when I got my first telephone call from General Barsanti. I went right over there and straightened things out. That was my opening encounter with the new CG.

Things went downhill from there. After the assumption of command ceremony, there was a reception at the Officer's Club. Nancy was there. General Baranti was there with his wife and his aide in the receiving line. After going through it we made our way over to the punch bowl. He came over and we had some small talk. Then he looked at me and said, "Cushman, I hear you've been running this post. That stops right now." That's what he told me. I said, "Well sir, I'm sure it will."

He gave us the impression that he was sent to the 101st to get it ready for deployment to Vietnam. That proved to be correct. He was very demanding. He wanted to be sure

everybody knew he was in charge and that he meant business. He started raising hell with all kinds of people and the staff. My office was right next to his and a door on my left wall opened into his office. One morning he called for the G3 to come down to his office. The G3 came down and said to me, "The CG just called for me." I said, "Well, go on in. Don't stop here." As soon as he arrived in the CG's office General Barsanti asked, "Where have you been?" The G3 answered, "I stopped by the Chief of Staff." Barsanti came right through the door to my office and said, "Don't you ever stop the G3 from seeing me again." That was the way it was.

We went through about three days of that. The staff was in an uproar because this was totally different from General Sternberg. It was night and day, and Barsanti was being unreasonable a lot of the time. I got the staff together in the conference room and had Mrs. Vaughn, my secretary, take notes. I told the staff something like, "We're going through a rough spot now with a brand new CG but let's keep our cool. He's got a lot of good ideas. He is not interested in hearing excuses for not getting something done. He wants things done quickly. Be responsive to him and get the job done. Even if it seems unreasonable, do it. Don't argue about it, go ahead and do it. If you have any serious problems come to me about it."

My secretary typed up the notes from the meeting. I still have them. I reviewed them and took them into the CG. I said, "Sir, This is what I just told your staff." A few minutes later he came to my door and said, "What do you mean I'm unreasonable?" I said, "Well sir, that's what I said."

I worked hard to prepare finished staff work for his review and signature. He grew to appreciate that. One afternoon at about quitting time he came into my office to say, "There's nothing in my in box." I said, "Sir, I'm staying right here working on it." He left for the day.

The 2d Brigade of the 101st was commanded by Doug Mitchell. His two years were up in September 1967. I told Barsanti that I wanted to command the 2d Brigade. Finally he decided he was going to make me a brigade commander and that I would take command on the first of September.

By then we knew that we would be heading overseas and that we were expected to move out in December. Barsanti had been hard on us because he wanted the 101st Airborne Division to be ready for combat. He was tough. He knew he was going to be taking the division into combat and that he didn't have much time to get it ready.

When I had finished my work on a plan to split the division and installation staff I showed it to Barsanti. He gave his approval and we got started in late July. Barsanti set up a separate division headquarters. He made Bill Tallon, the division artillery commander, his division chief of staff. He set up the division staff in a building down on the troop line. I created a post staff up at the post headquarters. The 6th Infantry Division was going to take over the post when we left. I had a colonel from the 6th Division right with me. He took over as installation chief of staff when I left to take brigade command.

INTERVIEWER: The division artillery commander then became the division chief of staff?

GEN CUSHMAN: Yes. Dick Pohl, class of 1946, came in to command division artillery. All this was happening in July and early August, a very busy time. Barsanti was raising hell, stopping soldiers in the street and things like that. So word got out. The commander of the XVIII Airborne Corps, Lieutenant General Throckmorton [General John Lathrop Throckmorton], made a visit to find out what was going on. When asked about it, I told Throckmorton, "Sir, he's all right. He's just being hard on us. He wants to get us ready".

INTERVIEWER: Had there been IG complaints?

GEN CUSHMAN: Several of them probably. I'll tell you another story. Our daughter Cecelia was home from college that summer and she wanted to get a civilian job on the post. I told her to apply at the personnel office. She was smart and hard working and could type. She got a temporary job in the comptroller's office. Barsanti also had a young daughter. He told me, "I need to get my daughter a job too. Fix it up." I told the civilian personnel officer to expect a job application from the CG's daughter, "Do what you can for her." He came back and told me she can't type well enough. That was a civil service requirement. You had to be able to type a certain number of words a minute. I told him to test her again. And again. Finally she passed the typing examination and got hired.

When the transition of the installation staff was done in August, I took three weeks leave. I settled Nancy and our family in Lexington, MA, where her parents were living, and moved into bachelor housing at Fort Campbell.

I took command of the 2d Brigade on September 1, 1967.

Chapter Seventeen, Commanding the 2d Brigade, 101st Airborne Division

In 1986 I drafted the 174 page A Personal Memoir: An Account of the 2d Brigade and 2d Brigade Task Force, 101st Airborne Division,September 1967 through June 1968. I wrote it for distribution to members of the brigade assembled at a reunion in July 1996 at Fort Campbell, KY, saying, "This account makes use of memory, of personal letters written at the time, of material from my files, of the contributions of others who participated in these events, and of unit journals and other records on file at the National Archives facility at Suitland, Maryland." It has since gone into the hands of many former members of the 2d Brigade of 1967-68.

http://www.angelfire.com/rebellion/101abndivvietvets/ is the website of the 101st Airborne Division Vietnam Veterans Organization, formed by brigade members of my time. Scroll down to "War Stories." Click to bring up my memoir's cover page, introduction, and table of contents. To click on an item brings up that item.

Command of the 2d Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, is the period of my career that I treasure most.

INTERVIEWER: Sir, please discuss your assumption of command of the 2d Brigade.

GENERAL CUSHMAN: Once I had finished preparing the division and installation staffs for the division's deployment, General Barsanti told me that on 1 September (1967) I would take command of the 2d Brigade. I settled my family in Lexington, MA, and moved into a bachelor dwelling of the type that in World War Two was used by regimental commanders. With my own vehicle I could give the brigade my full attention.

The 2d Brigade consisted of a brigade headquarters and headquarters company and three airborne infantry battalions, the 1-501st, 2-501st, and 1-502d. The battalions were reorganizing under a new, G-Series, TO&E that reflected experience in the Vietnam War. It called for four rifle companies, a combat support company that included a 4.2 mortar platoon, and a headquarters company with a reconnaissance platoon. Along with the rest of the division, we had been alerted that we were to deploy by air to Vietnam in mid-December.

I had a good staff. LTC Earl Keesling, USMA 1951, was my executive officer. CSM A.B. Cannon was my brigade command sergeant major; as a pathfinder with the 82nd Airborne Division he had parachuted into Normandy on D-Day. The brigade S-1 was Major Jerry Allen, the S-3 was Major Russ Miller, and the S-4 was Major Jim White; all were top-flight. I had excellent battalion commanders. Pete Piatrowski, a Korean War veteran, had commanded the 1-501st for several months. The 2-501st had just been taken over by Dick Tallman; he had entered West Point in 1945 as a sergeant after seeing combat in Europe. Jack Bishop, newly arrived to command the 1-502d, had been an enlisted man in the 82d Airborne Division in World War II and had commanded a rifle company in the Korean War.

Each battalion was creating a fourth rifle company. They were drawing new equipment. They were shipping out those soldiers who were non-deployable and were receiving the fillers that would bring them to full strength. These fillers, while airborne qualified, were of a variety of M0Ss -- cooks, drivers, clerks, but mostly not infantry. It would be a month before we could begin unit training. Before deploying four weeks must be set aside so that half of the soldiers could take two weeks leave while the other half prepared the battalion for departure. We could thus have only six weeks of unit training.

From my 1996 memoir:

General Barsanti and I were of one mind in believing in troop discipline and a strong chain of command, and in the supreme value of the use of these and of quality training in saving men's lives in combat. His own slogan was "Bring them back alive."

I would make the chain of command strong by exercising it day and night. For example, no matter how thin were the ranks when a company fell into formation and when it moved, I ordered that it would never deviate from its organization by squad and platoon. If one squad had only three men present, and another had eight, we would never "break it off" and even the ranks -- whether out for a run or marching to training. This was an article of faith, aimed at driving home the principle of squad and platoon integrity and the chain of command. A first sergeant would not gather the troops around him to give instructions; he would tell platoon sergeants, who would go through their squad leaders. Squad leaders would inspect, and be accountable for, their squads. And so on.

Early one morning I went out to the first formation of a company of the 1-501. I watched them break off and even the ranks. I went to battalion headquarters and reminded LTC Piatrowski of my order. I said, "This is the last time I want to tell you about that."

Later that morning Pete came to my office. Standing in front of my desk he said, "Sir, I don't think I can work for you." I said "Why is that?" He said, "You threatened me." I said, "I didn't threaten you. I said that's the last time I want to tell you to keep your squads together." He said, "Well I think it was a threat and I don't think I can serve under your command."

Saying, "All right, I'll take care of that right now with the division commander," I reached behind my desk for the telephone. Pete quickly let me know that he really did not want to be relieved.

I told him that I had confidence in him and to return to his battalion. He did a fine job. Pete was wounded and evacuated in an early Vietnam action.

<u>INTERVIEWER</u>: How old were you at the time?

<u>GENERAL CUSHMAN</u>: I was 46.

<u>INTERVIEWER</u>: Were you young compared to the other brigade commanders?

GENERAL CUSHMAN: No. I had been with the division for two years and I knew the division and the post. I knew the people who ran the post and I was very familiar with the training areas and ranges. I knew how to get things done at Fort Campbell.

INTERVIEWER: Describe your brigade training plan.

GENERAL CUSHMAN: It began with an individual training program that focused on subjects like map reading, first aid, and so forth. I decided that unit training would have to wait until we reached full strength in October. We spent September filling, organizing, and getting in shape. We were leaving for Vietnam in the middle of December and I figured we would need four full weeks for packing and for leave, half the troops at a time; in those weeks we would focus on individual skill training. We were going to get new weapons, M16s, so I saved some rifle marksmanship and weapons zeroing until those weeks. So we had only six weeks for unit training.

We would train in the field Monday through Friday; Saturday was for inspections and training in garrison. Russ Miller arranged for six weeks of suitable training areas. One battalion commander used one set of training areas to prepare one week of lesson plans, including ammunition requirements, for Squad in Attack. A second prepared a week of lesson plans for Squad in Defense using another set of areas. The third prepared a week of lesson plans for Squad on Patrol. Ambush, night operations, and live firing exercises were included, as was air assault training -- getting in and out of helicopters. They did all this in September. The first week of October each battalion commander executed his prepared lesson plans; he then passed them to the other battalion commanders for Weeks Two and Three.

Nine days of Weeks Four and Five were devoted to platoon training in like manner, with each battalion commander preparing three days of lesson plans for Platoon in Attack, Platoon in Defense, and Platoon on Patrol. In Week Six the full brigade went to the field for squad through company training under battalion control.

I saw Vietnam as a company commander's war. Several of our company commanders were armor, artillery or special operations officers. They had to learn as they went.At the end of Week Six we would have a trained outfit. That was my plan.

About training, platoon sergeant Joseph Stone[5] had this to say:

"I think I had only two infantry in my platoon, a pretty good-sized platoon, full strength. We had cooks. We had one band member. We had mechanics, various other MOSs. And we had a short period of time to train them in. We had six weeks of real intensive training, infantry training. Live fire exercises, long road marches, village fighting. I liked the live firing exercises. And of course night training. We did a lot of night training. Ambushes every other night in Vietnam. It was a good training program."

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[5]He was 1st Sergeant (Ret) Joseph O. Stone, from Lima, IN, speaking in a DVD that I created in the 1990s for members of the 2d Brigade of my time. The DVD consisted of a narrative using batte area scenes from footage that I had taken in a 1995 visit to Vietnam, along with with appearances of selected members of the 2d Brigade. One such member was platoon sergeant Stone, 2nd Platoon, Charlie Company, 1-501st.

INTERVIEWER: What else?

GENERAL CUSHMAN: In September, while the battalions were forming up, I was able to go to Vietnam with General Barsanti and some division staff officers. At the 1st Infantry Division we learned its modus operandi. Its battalions halted in the late afternoon and brought in CH-47s loaded with fortification materials. They then built an impregnable night position from which they could defeat any enemy attack with heavy loss. Meanwhile the enemy was free to roam the countryside. We vowed that the 101st would do no such thing. We intended to operate at night, taking it from the enemy. That informed our subsequent training.

The noted historian SLA Marshall with LTC David Hackworth[6] had collaborated on a Vietnam Primer published by the Army. The Chief of Staff called it a "critique of tactics and command practices in small combat units digested from historical research of main fighting operations from May 1966 to February 1967." I made copies available to all leaders. The Army's Human Resources Research Organization (HumRRO} had produced a series of useful studies on aspects of platoon level leadership, such as combat under conditions of sleep deprivation. We made these required reading for each platoon leader and a mandatory text for the battalions' officer schools

I was a demanding commander. I had high standards. I drove my commanders hard in both administration and training. I was everywhere, day and night, on weekends, in the barracks, and in the field. General Barsanti was the same way. We believed that sweat in training would save lives in combat and that good administration was essential to a good outfit. One day at a commanders' meeting Jack Bishop said something like, "I'll be glad when we get to Vietnam where we can cut out all this stuff."

INTERVIEWER: How did your efforts turn out?

GENERAL CUSHMAN: Years later, after I had retired, in an airport bookstore I found Line Doggie: Foot Soldier in Vietnam[7] by Charles Gadd. Its opening words were...

It was snowing lightly that morning of December 14, 1967, when our C-141 Starlifter ascended from the runway at Fort Campbell Kentucky. We were a well-trained group -- A Company, 1st Battalion, 501st infantry -- an element of Uncle Sam's proud 101st Airborne Division, the Screaming Eagles... We were originally from every aspect of training that the Army had to offer -- military police, armor, artillery, mechanics, clerks, cooks, signal, and many others -- but three months of intense infantry training and schooling at Fort Campbell had honed us to the sharpness of expensive cutlery. By December we had trained together in weapons qualification, defensive and offensive tactics and maneuvers, ambush, night movement, and all the other types of training that make an infantry company what it should be. We were proud, gung ho, well-trained...

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[6] In 1965-66 Hackworth had fought in Vietnam with the 101st's 1st Brigade. Representing the Army's Chief of Military History, he had then accompanied Marshall to Vietnam. Marshall's original purpose had been to develop material for training Army historians. The Vietnam Primer was a by-product.

[7] Presidio Press, Novato, CA, 1987

Charlie Gadd[8] exaggerated a bit, but I did think that we had done about as well as could be expected. I was later proved wrong. We should have done better. In our first weeks in Vietnam we had two incidents of casualty producing short 81mm mortar rounds.

INTERVIEWER: Did you take some time to be with your family?

GENERAL CUSHMAN: Yes. I went back to Lexington just before I left and visited with my family.

INTERVIEWER: How and when did the 2d Brigade get into combat?

GENERAL CUSHMAN: Earl Keesling and the advance party had prepared a place for us at Cu Chi not far from Saigon. Cu Chi was the base camp of the 25th Infantry Division. We would occupy spaces vacated by a brigade that had moved elsewhere. We were now a brigade task force, joined by the 1-321st Field Artillery (105mm) Battalion, by a company each from the division engineer and medical battalions, by a reinforced company from the division support command, and by other contingents -- military police, communications, and the like. My brigade command post was at Cu Chi, as were the base camps from which battalions went out on operations. We expected to begin with in-country training

INTERVIEWER: Did you know what that meant?

GENERAL CUSHMAN: It meant going outside the compound. They had division base camps and brigade base camps. You could not train inside those camps. You had to go into the countryside. without going into contested areas, and do squad exercises and rifle marksmanship and that kind of thing

INTERVIEWER: How many weeks did you think you'd have to train in country?

GENERAL CUSHMAN: I thought a couple of weeks. The climate was different and you had to get used to it. However, within minutes of leaving the main gate a unit could get into a firefight. The rice fields and woodlands around our Cu Chi base were contested by the Viet Cong. The base perimeter was ringed with a high fence. Foxholes behind it were manned nightly. Our battalions manned their share. Beyond the fence there were concertina wire and trip flares in place.

I found the environment of brigade command in combat not all that different from that when I had been senior advisor to the 21st ARVN division in 1963-64. A difference: While there were long periods when I was in no in danger being shot at, my judgments now affected mission accomplishment and the lives and well being of my troops.

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[8]His book's dust jacket said, "...he now lives in Wake Forest, NC, with his wife and three children." I reached Charlie by phone and on a 1990s trip to Sullivan's Island, SC, my wife Nancy and I went by his home for a visit. He and his family were living in a lovely neighborhood. As sales representative for a drug manufacturer, Charlie had done well. Unlike most 2d Brigade veterans whom I had reached, he chose not to join in our, then frequent, brigade reunions. He had put his Vietnam experience behind him.

I remember well our first combat action. A platoon had placed a night ambush near a hamlet about a mile from Cu Chi. The enemy had discovered it. It was under attack. Radios at the brigade CP tuned to the battalion command net were crackling with the urgent voices of battle. It sounded like a bad situation. What should we do?

We did nothing. The next day I went to the scene and found that the action had gone well. All concerned had done as they had been trained.

Then came serious trouble. Early December 27 the 1-502d, minus one company, departed Cu Chi in battle formation on its first daylight sweep and a night security mission. It was operating in an area where we had been told that for weeks there had been no significant enemy contact. Everything had been arranged -- tactical air support on call, Cobra gunships standing by, artillery registered, CH-47 resupply on hand.

That morning the 1-502d ran into an enemy underground tunnel complex, well defended. In an hours long fight the battalion lost two men killed and ten wounded. A gunship was shot down, both pilots killed. The count of enemy casualties was minimal.[9]

We took this setback seriously. I wondered, what had gone wrong? How could we have done better? General Barsanti asked for a detailed report. We learned and pressed on.

A week later we had a visit from Brigadier General Frank Clay, assistant division commander. His demeanor led me to believe that he was checking me out for General Barsanti; should he consider relieving me? Decades later Frank and I lived side-by-side in a military retirement residence. He told me that was indeed the case; he had said No.

About January 10 General Westmoreland visited. That night I wrote my wife that General Westmoreland "seemed preoccupied." Perhaps that was because he asked me what our casualties had been so far, and how many of the enemy we had to our credit. He had frowned when he heard the, unimpressive, numbers.

Among other things at the time, I was attending to the welfare of my men. I began a practice of checking daily the number on sick call. I insisted that it was the responsibility of a squad leader to supervise the troops' taking the anti-malaria pill required weekly.

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[9] In the mid-1980s I received an interesting letter:
"Airborne. Hello sir. I am Harry Adams, life member #105 [101st Airborne Division Association]. I see that you have a small life member number also...
"What I am writing about is this. I want to thank you for showing us, the common foot soldiers, something of the officer corps that we could be proud of as Americans.
"I was in Co. B. 1/502d Abn Inf. I deployed with the division on Operation Eagle Thrust Dec 12th 1967. While operating around Cu Chi in late Dec. 1967 we had several men killed from Co. A, including the commanding officer, first sergeant, and a platoon leader. The bodies were badly burned & blown apart. The usually helpful Dustoff helicopters refused to transport them back to Cu Chi.
"The battle continued and then your chopper landed. You stepped out and ordered your personal crew to 'take those boys home.' You stayed there with us with your pistol drawn.
"Sir, that was the finest act I saw by an officer in Vietnam. You gained the respect of the finest men in the world, the common footsoldier. No officer could have done better.
"H.R.Adams, Sr. All the way."

Through mid-January our battalions continued In-country orientation and training in areas near Cu Chi. We engaged a fair amount of enemy. But we were not having much in the way of results, considering the casualties we suffered.

INTERVIEWER: How did it happen that you were sent north?

GENERAL CUSHMAN: The full brigade task force was taking part in operations with the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment in the Michelin rubber plantation near An Loc 40 miles north. We had been beating the bushes for a couple of days with little contact when on 22 January division told us that General Westmoreland had just ordered that the 2d Brigade Task Force was to move hundreds of miles north to the ARVN I Corps area. We would be under the operational control of the 1st Cavalry Division.[10]

That order came as the 1-501 was in a combat assault. We cancelled that operation and assembled the 1-501 at Cu Chi. From the Cu Chi airstrip it would move the next day by C-130 aircraft. The rest of the brigade task force would follow. It would leave Cu Chi.

The brigade journal, 23 January: "1-501 Inf and A-1-321 departed Cu Chi with all essential fighting equipment for Phu Bai, RVN, as the initial element of the 2d Brigade… A total of 21 C-130 sorties lifted 806 personnel, 51 vehicles, and 7 equipment pallets… The first chalk departed 0835 hours and the last chalk departed 1916 hours. Rear detachment of 1-321 Arty and communications for the Bde HHC will depart Cu Chi on 24 January for Phu Bai."

At 0733 on the morning of 26 January, with the brigade tactical command post, I left Cu Chi.By the evening of the 26th the bulk of the 2d Brigade task force that was scheduled for Phu Bai had arrived. The 1st Cavalry Division had decided that the 1-502d, our last battalion to depart Cu Chi, with an artillery battery would fly directly to Quang Tri where it would be opcon to the Cav's 1st Brigade. The 1-502 would close into Quang Tri on 27 January.

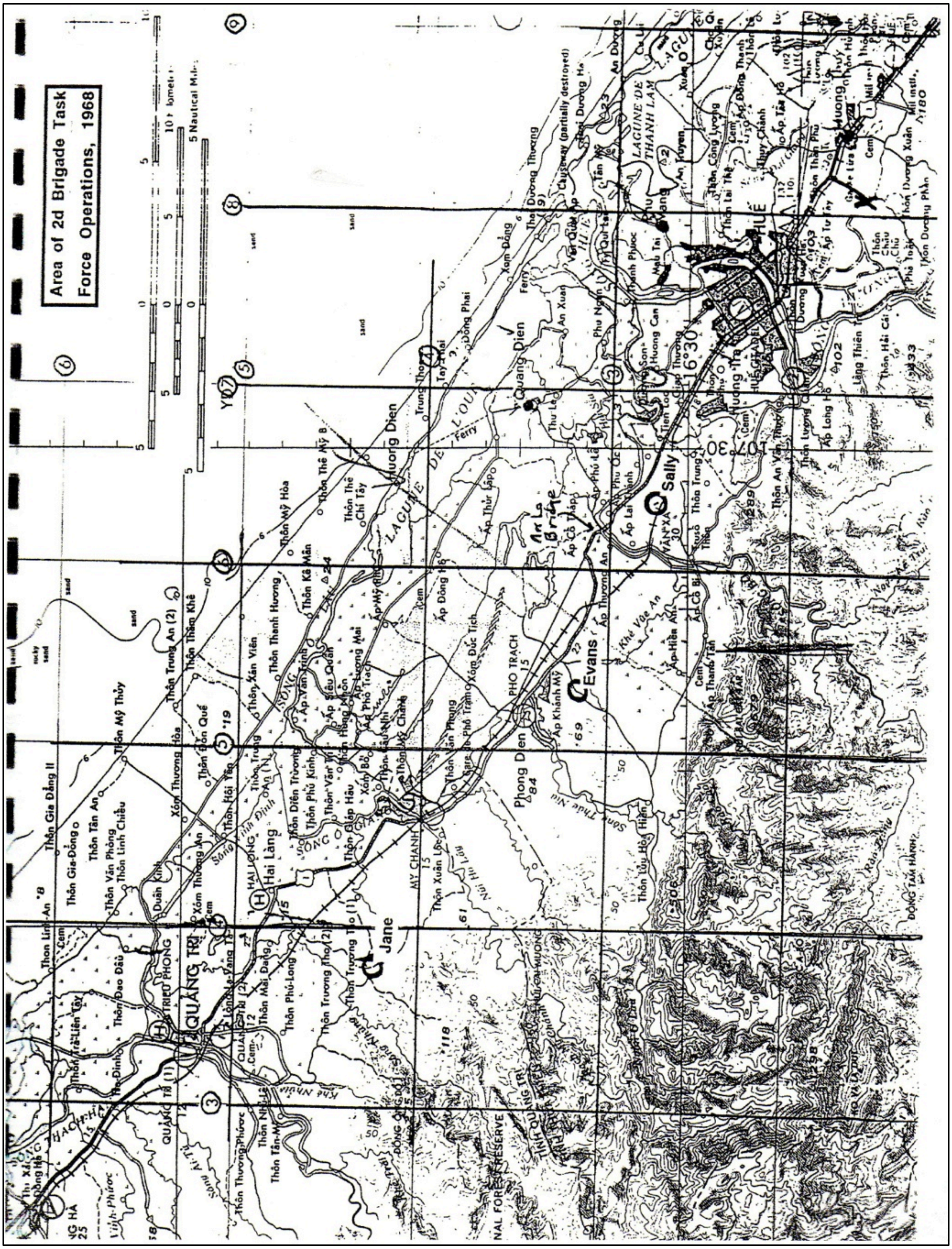
The brigade situation report of 1500 January 26, to the CG, 101st Airborne Division: "2d Bde Tac CP group arrived Hue approximately 261000 Jan. CO and party moved to 1st Air Cav Div CP. CO reported to CG, 1 ACD, at 261130 Jan. 2d Bde CP opened at 1200."

I reported to Major General John Tolson, Cdr 1st Cavalry Division, as he was having lunch at his command post at LZ El Paso (marked with an X on the map, next page).

INTERVIEWER: How were you received by the 1st Cavalry Division?

GENERAL CUSHMAN: Our brigade task force, less the 1-502d with the Cav's 1st Brigade at Quang Tri, was assigned space at LZ El Paso. As our elements flowed in, the 1st Cav put us to work. The 1-501 took over its share of the base perimeter. On the 27th one company conducted local air assault operations using the Cav's helicopters.

[10]General Westmoreland, concerned about the enemy buildup in northern I Corps, had recently moved the 1st Cavalry Division there, minus one brigade. We would make the 1st Cav a three brigade force.


Area of 2d Brigade Task Force Operations, 1968
5 Nautical Miles
QUANG TRI
TRIEU PHONG
Hai Lang
MY CHANH
Jane
Phong Dien
PHO TRACH
Evans
Sally
Quang Dien
Huong Dien
Huong Tra
HUE
LAGUNE DE THANH LAM
LAGUNE DE L'OUI
Causeway (partially destroyed)
SONG THACH HAN
An La Bridge
Thon Hai Cai
Lang Thien
DONG TAM HANH

The 1st Cav had been in Vietnam since mid-1965. It had just moved north from Ahn Khe, its original base camp, leaving behind its 2d Brigade. Division headquarters was at LZ El Paso near the Hue-Phu Bai airfield. The 1st Brigade was up at Quang Tri. The 3d Brigade was at Camp Evans, former base camp of a Marine regiment, some twenty kiliometers north of Hue.

They received us politely and with I think curiosity. They were experienced, well regarded. They knew the ropes, and they had their own ways. We were new to the theater, learning our way, and unproven. I myself came to them without a combat reputation; indeed, I did not know what reputation among them I might have had.

The 2-501 arrived January 28. On the 29th the entire brigade task force closed into the Phu Bai airfield. Meanwhile, the 1st Cav had decided that its command post, its division base, and the 2-501 would move to Camp Evans. The Cav's 3rd Brigade would move to LZ Sally, ten kilometers north of Hue. Our brigade headquarters, along with the 1-501, would move to LZ Jane, a firebase 10 km south of Quang Tri, replacing a battalion of the Cav's 1st Brigade; that move was scheduled for January 31st.

At 2053, January 29, the 1st Cav told us that we would move to LZ Jane January 30.

In my A Personal Memoir[11] is this paragraph:

> ***I have found Copy 11, of 64 copies, of the 2d Brigade Frag Order issued at 2300 on that night, January 29. Signed by Russ Miller, it is accompanied by Annex E (Route Overlay), with routes, times, and checkpoints for two serials, to fit the 1:250,000 scale map. That frag order is a beauty. Its paragraph 2, Mission, reads: TF 2d Bde (-) moves by motor commencing 300830 Jan to LZ Jane vicinity YD378430, establishes FOB and prepares to conduct operations in AO to be assigned.***

I have always been proud of my brigade staff. That effort was one of their best.

My C&C Huey had come up from Cu Chi. From it en route to LZ Jane I observed the convoy, Highway 1, and the surrounding region. The 1-501, A Battery, 1-321 Arty, and the brigade HHC occupied LZ Jane on 30 January. It was New Years Eve, Chinese calendar.

That night the NVA and Viet Cong launched their Tet Offensive.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about that.

GENERAL CUSHMAN: LZ Jane firebase had been set up on some low hills at the end of a dirt road that ran westward from Highway 1 at the town of Hai Lang, eight kilometers away. Our convoy's lead vehicles reached it on the afternoon of January 30. The convoy closed well after dark. When I landed my C&C Huey, which I told the

[11]Footnote1, page 17-1

crew to take to a safe location,[12] the brigade and battalion command posts had been set up. Using some positions of the previous occupants, preparation of the firebase defense was underway. A few tents and bunkered sleeping positions had been left behind. I was asleep in one of those when mortar rounds fell and explosions and small arms fire began at about 4:00 am January 31.

In my DVD[13] Sergeant Stone later related...

"It was the first day in position. We were just getting organized. We got hit that night by the NVA and the VC when they kicked off the Tet Offensive, which was probably the biggest offensive of the war, My platoon area was the one that got hit the hardest. We got hit by the NVA sappers, which were trained commandos, trained to break into the perimeter. They had satchel charges and hand grenades. They jumped the wire -- agile little fellows. We had concertina wire out, tripwires and claymores, and they were still getting through it. But they didn't get into the compound. We didn't let them in. It worked out real good. My platoon did a good job."

From the 2d Brigade summary, January 31: "LZ Jane began receiving mortar & RPG fire at approx 0405H from Vic YD87284211. At 0427, units reported enemy ground activity to their front, enemy tried to penetrate 1-501 perimeter. By 0455, elements reported all quiet. 1-501 elements had 6 friendly WIA and 14 NVA KIA, 3 NVA POW (medevaced). 11 indiv wpns were captured, a crew served wpn (RPG-2 launcher) and one flare pistol. Negative further activity reported."

As Tet was launched nationwide, the 1-501st had been ready.

The Tet attack caught the 2-501 split between LZ El Paso and Camp Evans. The 1-502 was fighting hard at Quang Tri under the Cav's 1st Brigade. Brigade rear was at Phu Bai. At LZ Jane we learned that the enemy had taken Hai Lang, but that the district chief and his US advisors were holed up in a compound.

<u>INTERVIEWER</u>: Were you surprised by the Tet Offensive?

<u>GENERAL CUSHMAN:</u> I thought it was a local attack for which we had been ready. I didn't know it was part of a Vietnam-wide offensive.

<u>INTERVIEWER</u>: How long was it before you were made aware that this was a major offensive?

<u>GENERAL CUSHMAN:</u> We figured it out that day. We got news reports on Armed Forces Radio. We knew that something big was happening with the 1st Cavalry Division, that the division was besieged. Its lifeline was Route 1. That had been cut at Hai Lang.

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[12] They took it to the landing pad at the Hue Citadel, at which was located the headquarters of the 1st ARVN Division, and spent the night with the division advisory team. The NVA attacked that night. When I next saw my helicopter, it had been completely wrecked. How I made do without one for weeks is a story in itself.

[13] Footnote 5, page 17-3.

<u>INTERVIEWER</u>: What did you know about the enemy in Hai Lang?

<u>GENERAL CUSHMAN:</u> Not much. On 30 January I had sent a detail to establish liaison with the Hai Lang district chief and his advisor. The next day I picked up a two jeep escort, machine guns mounted, from our attached MP platoon and headed down to find the district chief myself. We came under fire and were unable to get through. The 1-501 patrolled around LZ Jane. We had no helicopter support. Uncertainty prevailed.

In "Forty Years Ago This Week"[14] I described the next few days.

On February 1-2 the 1-501 operated around LZ Jane and to relieve the ARVN district chief at his compound. On the afternoon of 2 February MG Tolson, CG, 1st Cavalry Division, told me that the next day I would move our brigade command post down to Camp Evans. I was to leave the 1-501 at LZ Jane to be opcon to the Cav's 1st Brigade. I would take command of the 2-501, which was still split between Phu Bai and Camp Evans. That was an unwelcome surprise.[15]

However, when on the morning of February 3, a supply convoy from Quang Tri to Camp Evans was stopped by enemy north of Hai Lang, General Tolson ordered us to reopen Highway 1. The 1-501 hastily attacked with B Company, followed by D Company, and then A Company. The enemy was well dug in. SFC Timothy O'Connor, in <u>Blood Brothers</u>,[16] has written: "During the assault all three companies were turned back. Captain Shive (A Company commander) gave orders for the Third Platoon to attack and for the First and Second Platoons to give them cover fire. As the First Platoon started into the village all hell broke loose. The sky above was loaded with flying lead… We could see that the First Platoon was running into a meat grinder…"

From the 1-501 Journal: "Bn commander advised that the situation was bad. Bde CO told CO 1-501 to pull back and call in artillery… The requested air strikes to support 1-501 were cancelled at 1535 hrs due to rainy misty weather." The 1-501 would attack 4 February with B, C, and D Companies and well-coordinated artillery support.

And so it did, to clean the enemy out of Hai Lang. B Company fought its way into the village and set up a blocking position, while C Company attacked through the village from the south and D Company from the west. By nightfall Hai Lang belonged to the 1-501, which had four men killed and 40 wounded, 20 of whom returned to duty. Captain Gordon Mansfield, commanding C Company, received the Distinguished Service Cross for his actions that day.

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[14] In italics is from a series of weekly posts that In late 2007 I began for the website of the 101st Airborne Division Vietnam Veterans Association, which had been organized by some of my 2d Brigade veterans. The posts can be found at http://www.angelfire.com/rebellion/101abndivvietvets/. Scroll down to "War Stories." Click and search.

[15] Although our battalions were welcome, the 2nd Brigade's leadership had perhaps not been fully satisfying to General Tolson. His 1st Brigade commander at Quang Tri was a proven part of his team, had his full confidence, and was doing very well. To have taken away our mission at this juncture would have derailed us and completely changed our future fortunes. We had gone ahead with plans to move when fortunately General Tolson changed his mind, a key juncture for the 2d Brigade.

[16] New York, Carlton Press, 1990, p95

The 1st Cavalry Division cancelled the move of the 2d Brigade to Camp Evans; we would remain at Jane. The rest of the week the 1-501 completed opening Highway 1 and kept it open. The 2-501, which had moved by truck from LZ El Paso to Phu Bai, could not continue to Camp Evans; the roads were cut. Because of marginal weather and a C-47 shortage (one C-47 lifting troops was shot down, no casualties) the 2-501 did not complete its move until February 7.

Opcon to the Cav's 1st Brigade and operating with Cav Hueys and gunships, and with artillery and air support, the 1-502 (minus one company[17]) had since Tet been fighting continuous search and destroy missions around Quang Tri with excellent results. On 5 February it reported a B Company ambush of an NVA mortar platoon. The night of February 8-9, the enemy struck back with a rocket and 40 round mortar attack and penetrated the battalion night defensive position, causing 9 KIA, including the A Co forward observer and first sergeant, and 25 WIA, including the company commander.

On 9 February, the 1-502 was helilifted to LZ Sharon; its foxhole strengths (A -91, B -104, D-136 and E-107) were evidence of its days of heavy fighting. C Company would join it from the south the next day. By nightfall February 10 the 1-502 would move by CH-47 to LZ Jane and we would be a two battalion brigade.

On February 10 I issued brigade Operation Order 4 for Jeb Stuart: "TF 2d Bde (-) continues offensive operations to locate/destroy enemy forces and to conduct minesweeping/ clearing operations of Highway 1… with infantry battalions in assigned AOs." The 1-501 would operate along Highway 1 and the Street Without Joy area that paralleled it to the east. The 1-502 operated closer to LZ Jane.

The weather turned worse. Temperatures went down to 55 degrees at night and were rarely over 70. The troops had sweaters and ponchos, but often spent the night in water. Sergeant O'Connor writes:[18] "The rain did not let up... No words can describe the misery of a combat infantryman lying in the mud with a cold rain beating down on you waiting for the VC to hit your position or lying in an ambush site shaking from the cold rain."

Even so, the 2d Brigade was springing on average one ambush each night. In the drizzle and fog we still had helicopters for combat assault almost every day, and were working well with the First Cav's gunships.

We had lost Pete Piatrowski. He was wounded and evacuated while directing a battle in his C&C helicopter, as was his replacement a few days later. The 101st sent up LTC Wayne Prokup to command the 1-501.

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[17]C-1-502 had been left behind on 24 January protecting the division command post. The night of Tet, it had air assaulted to the rooftop of the US embassy in Saigon.

[18]Blood Brothers, p104.

Meanwhile the 2-501, opcon to the 3rd Brigade of the 1st Cavalry Division, was operating out of LZ Sally. On 21 February the 3d Brigade launched a four-battalion attack to the southeast. The 2/501 on its right was headed for La Chu. An NVA regimental headquarters was there. The next day saw some of the heaviest fighting of the Vietnam War.

From the diary of Cleo Hogan, D Company commander:

"Up at 0600 and began to move... Company D and Company C on line… (By noon) we knew we were close to the NVA… In just a little over three and a half hours we had overrun a major NVA headquarters. The dead NVA were everywhere. 21 men from D Company had been wounded; SSG Simms had been killed."

That day the 2-501 lost six men killed and 31 wounded. Staff Sergeant Clifford Simms and Sergeant Joe Hooper of D Company received the Medal of Honor for their actions. From Sergeant Hooper's award recommendation: "...Sergeant Hooper personally cleaned out eleven enemy bunkers, destroyed three enemy houses, knocked out two machine guns, and killed either by grenades, rifle fire, LAWs, or hand to hand fighting at least 22 enemy."

Having taken La Chu, the 2/501 drove on to enter Hue, occupying its west wall at 1630 February 25.

<u>INTERVIEWER</u>: Tell me about your brigade's operating routine.

<u>GENERAL CUSHMAN</u>: Our basic maneuver unit was the company, although platoons and squads might be given independent missions -- ambushes, patrols, security and the like -- and the battalion reconnaissance platoons usually operated independently.

After a day's operation companies occupied night defensive positions from which they would set out ambushes or listening posts and on the perimeter of which two-man teams would always have one man awake. As dawn broke the troops would get up, check their weapons, have a headcount, open C-ration boxes for breakfast, heat their dehydrated coffee in canteen cups (with the heating tablet, or by breaking open a claymore mine for a piece of explosive to heat it with), take their malaria pills, and get ready for whenever the day had in store.

At full strength a rifle company had 164 officers and men. A rifle platoon had three squads of ten men each, a light machine gun squad of nine (two machine guns), and a command section with a lieutenant platoon leader, a platoon sergeant, a radio-telephone operator, and a medic, for 43 total. Squad members carried either the rifle or the M-79 grenade launcher with plenty of ammunition, plus hand grenades and often claymore mines -- not to mention two canteens of water, a box of C rations, and an extra pair of socks.

When its losses caused a platoon to shrink, the platoon leader would often move its two machine guns into the rifle squads; with further losses he would shrink the squads. A squad needed two three-man fire teams to permit it to "fire and maneuver." The squad

leader could lead one team, so the absolute minimum for a squad was six men including the leader. With 21 men a platoon could have three six-man squads, a platoon leader or platoon sergeant, an RTO, and a medic -- so a rifle company could function (but hardly so) with as few as 75 men.

Our companies never got to that size. I sought to keep their field strengths at no less than 100, and if at all possible at 120-125. This was not always possible.

By end-February, we had lost quite a few of our second lieutenant platoon leaders, of which we had had a practically full contingent when we left Fort Campbell. Young, brave, in vulnerable leadership positions, many were casualties before they had time to become battle-wise. Our platoons were often led by a sergeant first class platoon sergeant, and even on occasion by a staff sergeant. Squad leaders, who by TOE should have been staff sergeants, were often sergeants E-5.

Our troopers were marvelous -- brave, competent, by now battle-wise, and responsive. When we arrived in the 1st Cav's area of operation most of them had been together for months. They had bonded, and it seemed to me that those bonds had grown stronger in battle. Their discipline, willingness, and cheerfulness was an inspiration from which I drew much of my own strength. Although fully ready to commit them to battle, I was determined not to lose a single man to death or wounds through a failure on my part, to include a failure by me to insist on the highest standards in our care of the troops and in their own care of their weapons and of themselves.

I was a demanding leader. Troops do not like to be told to shave every day while they are in combat for days at a time, or when it is raining and they are miserable, but I told my leaders to see that they shaved regularly. I recognized that exceptions were tolerable when really called for, but I wanted each soldier to be in the habit of thinking well of himself every day and thus doing his job well; I expected leaders to set the example.

Our emphasis at Fort Campbell and Cu Chi on rigorous training at squad and platoon and on a strong chain of command had been paying off in battle and in personal health. Troops in northern I Corps were required to take two kinds of malaria pills, one weekly and the other daily. This called for discipline, I charged the chain of command to see to it that squad leaders had each soldier take his pill of both kinds.[19]

INTERVIEWER: When did you move to LZ Sally?

GENERAL CUSHMAN: On February 29 we turned LZ Jane over to the First Cav and moved to our new operating base at LZ Sally. The next day, with all three of its battalions nearby, the 2d Brigade task force was together for the first time since late January.

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[19]I made a practice of examining sick call records every day. I never learned of a single case of malaria in my command. Another indication of the strength of our chain of command was in the exit report of a Department of the Army team visiting Vietnam to survey problems with the M-16 rifle. Unlike the M1, it tended to malfunction if not regularly cleaned. I insisted that platoon and squad leaders saw to it that the troops cleaned their rifles. The survey team chief told me that the 2d Brigade had reported fewer malfunctions than any he had visited.

We began to organize an impenetrable defense of the brigade's future home. For the first time in weeks, the rain, fog, and drizzle stopped and the sun came out.

LZ Sally was ideal for a brigade base. It was on rising ground with good drainage and firm soil, There was a good access road to Highway 1 and ample room for each infantry battalion, using squad tents, to set up its base. It would accommodate all the batteries of the 1-321 Arty and another battery of 155s, as well as C-326 Engrs, B-326 Med and the other DISCOM units of the brigade task force, and for additional aviation units. LZ Sally had a short airstrip, which made a fine heliport for medevac and resupply helicopters.

One great advantage was that the headquarters of the 3d Regiment, 1st ARVN Division, was only half a mile away. On 1 March, I introduced myself to the regimental commander and his senior advisor. I was determined to assist them and to see that we would join the 1st ARVN Division and province and district forces in a single effort.

The weather continued excellent. LZ Sally took shape as a base from which our units in the field could be supported and to which they could from time to time return for a day or two of rest. We were joined by the 188th Assault Helicopter Company with its 23 Hueys and 8 Cobra gunships. It immediately became part of our team.

On March 10 the 2d Brigade task force returned to the full command of the 101st Airborne Division which minus its 1st and 2nd brigade task forces, had moved up to Camp Eagle, the renamed LZ El Paso. Under LTC Julius Becton, the 2-17 Cavalry Squadron then joined the brigade task force. Julius had somewhere found enough M-113 armored personnel carriers to mount his footsoldiers.

While our battalion areas of operations changed from time to time according to conditions our brigade area of operations area of operations was shaped like an inverted triangle. Initially the 1-501 was in a swath at the top. To its south the 1-502 had the region around LZ Sally and to the mountains. The 2-17th, at LZ Pinky south of LZ Sally, operated to the east along Highway 1 and beyond down to Hue. The 2-501's area was west of Hue, to be soon extended westward into the mountains.

The Viet Cong were in every village. NVA units which had survived the Tet offensive were present throughout our area. Only the district towns were in any way secure. It was the dry season. The weather was fine and the rice patties firm. Working with the 1st ARVN Division and the forces of the province chiefs, units of the 2d Brigade began scouring the countryside. They made, sometimes heavy, contact every day.

From the diary of Cleo Hogan, commanding D-2-501:

"20 March. Today we received orders to go up into the mountain outside of Hue called Hill 309. At 1500 hrs NVA on its top opened up with automatic weapons fire and RPGs. 3d Platoon attacked while 1st Platoon supported. Too much resistance. I ordered 3d Platoon to withdraw. The Air Force bombed it for nearly an hour and 3d Platoon tried again. I had to bring them back down. The Air Force sent in four more sets of fighters and they blasted it again. We tried for the third time but could not take the hill. Artillery blasted the hill all night.

"21 March. Still engaged with NVA on Hill 309. At 0700 the Air Force sent in two more sets of bombers. This time Dave Loftin attacked with 3d Platoon supporting, and for the fourth time we were forced to withdraw. The NVA have stood bravely in defense of this hill. After we withdrew the NVA came out of their bunkers and were walking around on top of the hill waving at us. We were only about 800 yards apart.

"22 March. At 1145 hrs Loftin, 2d Platoon, went around the hill while we kept their heads down with automatic weapons fire.[20] At 1225 Loftin was on top and had the hill secured. The hill isn't very large, but it looks down on everything. From there you can see Hue, Hwy 1, the ocean. I am very proud of these men. We killed 23 NVA and lost 1 KIA and 23 WIA"

I was with Cleo Hogan on Hill 309 that day when General Barsanti arrived in his helicopter. His aide was carrying a box of medals. After conferring with Captain Hogan, he pinned two Silver Stars and several Bronze Stars on members of D-2-501.

We had setbacks. On March 21 the NVA and Viet Cong bombarded LZ Sally with 60mm mortars and simultaneously launched a rocket, mortar, and automatic weapons attack on Pinky and its artillery position. Ten enemy sappers penetrated the perimeter. Seven defenders were killed and 21 wounded. The enemy lost heavily, but his attack demonstrated how dangerous and skilled he was, not to be underestimated. We redoubled our efforts to make sure that he never believed LZ Sally to be vulnerable to his attack.

On March 25, B Company of the 1-502 was operating along a trail in a wooded canyon in the hills six miles north of LZ Sally. B Company made contact with the enemy and continued to advance. As the battalion's mortar platoon fired 4.2 inch rounds into the jungle ahead of the column, a fire direction miscalculation placed several rounds directly on the company commander's command group near the head of the column. I was in the air nearby. By vertical descent and ascent I took my Huey C&C ship into a cleared area.

Dustoff helicopters joined. We were able to get the dead and wounded out. To the great grief of all concerned, B Company lost 11 KIA and 19 WIA.

<u>INTERVIEWER</u>: It must have been about this time that you conducted your first cordon operation.

<u>GENERAL CUSHMAN</u>: Yes. On the night of March 26-27, the 1-501 learned that part of the 810 VC local force battalion had just moved to the vicinity of a hamlet, Thuan Hoa, on the north bank of the Perfume River near Hue. US Navy patrol boats, call sign Pistol Pete, with whom the 1-501 was in contact, made a similar report. LTC Wayne Prokup, battalion commander, had already laid on a two-company combat assault, supported by the 188th Assault Helicopter Company. Redirecting its objectives, Wayne entered into a new type of operation that would change the brigade's fortunes.

[20]In my C&C Huey I had brought .50 caliber machine guns up to Cleo Hogan.

All day the 27th A Company and D Company had worked together with artillery, gunship, and tacair support. In the late afternoon they were near the Perfume River. A Company had driven the enemy into Thuan Hoa hamlet on the river's bank. D Company had air assaulted and moved to the hamlet's south. Wayne had lifted the 1-501's recon platoon into position to its north. I joined him on the ground. Night was coming on; the surrounded enemy might slip away.

If we could arrange for the Navy patrol boats in the Perfume River to join us, we could encircle the enemy. With the help of my staff at the command post, we arranged for the Navy patrol boats and called on USAF C-47's to drop flares so that the encircling troopers could see. During the night escaping enemy were killed or driven back, After bringing up psyops loudspeakers to broadcast surrender appeals without result, the 1-501 with artillery and air support took the hamlet. Results: 2 US KIA, 19 US WIA; 31 NVA-VC KIA, 3 POW, 22 WIA.

For what I think may have been the first time, a battalion commander guided flare ships from the ground as he fought through the night. This pattern would be repeated.

The 2d Brigade task force then got new orders. Our command post would move to Camp Evans ten kilometers northwest of LZ Sally. The 1-502 and the 2-17 Cav would also go to Camp Evans, along with the 2-327 Infantry Battalion from the 3d Brigade, under the 2d Brigade's opcon. The 2-501 would go into position at FSB Hardcore on the coast near Hai Lang.

We would leave LZ Sally and our area of operations in the temporary hands of the newly arrived 3d Brigade, 82d Airborne Division, which retained the 1-501 under its opcon. These shifts in position made possible the deployment of the full 1st Cavalry Division in operations to relieve the Marines besieged at Khe Sanh.

At Hardcore the 2-501 was operating where the 1-501 had been in February, along the VC-infested Street Without Joy. It soon conducted the 2d Brigade's second encirclement. The action began April 10 with a heavy contact by A Company at Phuoc Dien five

kilometers southwest of Hardcore. Dick Tallman helilifted D Company into position for a coordinated attack. After an air and artillery preparation, climaxed by CS tear gas grenades dropped from helicopters, the two companies attacked, meeting heavy resistance.

I was with Dick Tallman on the scene. It was clear that a sizable NVA force was in the hamlet, more than A and D Companies could handle alone. Reporting to the 101st command post at Camp Eagle, I said that that we had pulled back those companies while we put in artillery and air strikes with napalm and 500 lb bombs. General Barsanti came up on the command net. He told me "Do not withdraw A and D companies. Leave them there and clean up that area if it takes a week." He asked me what I needed.

I said that I needed helicopters to move B Company. The choppers were on the way immediately. With them Dick Tallman lifted B Company into a position from which it could link up with the flanks of A and D companies to form an encirclement. The encirclement was in place by nightfall. We called for USAF flareships to be on station for all night illumination, guided from the ground.

That night the 2-501 troopers were in the open fields encircling the enemy in the hamlet. I ordered that they be in two-man foxholes no more than 10 meters apart, one man always awake. Lit by flares they were able to spot any effort by the enemy to escape. During the night the NVA attempted to do so several times without success. The next day, after further artillery preparation, the 2-501 attacked to take the hamlet. Casualties to the 2-501 were 7 killed and 36 wounded. The enemy lost 70 killed, 13 captured; 24 individual and 7 crew-served weapons were taken. The 2-501 had trapped and destroyed a company of the 6th Battalion, 812th NVA regiment.

This operation had improved on the encirclement techniques used by the 1-501 on the Perfume River. Honing them further the 2d Brigade began a new phase that was characterized by this tactic. It lasted for the remainder of my time in Vietnam, and beyond.

INTERVIEWER: You had three principles of combat in Vietnam. What were they and how did you develop them?

GENERAL CUSHMAN: On May 29, 1984, a ceremony at the 101st Airborne Division memorial monument on the entrance road to Arlington Cemetery in Washington, DC, marked recent inscription on that memorial of the 1968 award of the Republic of Vietnam's Cross of Gallantry with Palm to the 2d Brigade Task Force.

These paragraphs were In the pamphlet prepared for that ceremony.

The Way of Fighting of the 2d Brigade, 101st Airborne Division

> **Three principles governed the operations of the 2d Brigade: *Work closely with the Vietnamese. Maintain unrelenting pressure on the enemy. At every opportunity surround the enemy and destroy him.***
>
> **Battalion commanders located themselves at district headquarters and took local forces under their wings; teamwork led to good intelligence and coordinated operations, and that led to good results. When General Barsanti arrived in March with the rest of the division, he found the brigade and its Vietnamese partners scouring the area by day and ambushing the enemy by night. He urged the brigade to keep the pressure on around the clock and assured helicopter and other support whenever any unit made contact.**

The brigade's trademark was the cordon operation: ***When an enemy force is located, surround it before nightfall. When the enemy is surrounded, seal off all avenues of escape. When the enemy is penned in, turn night into day with constant illumination from flare ships and artillery.***

To *work closely with the Vietnamese* was an article of faith to me. It had become part of my DNA. Soon after we set up our command post at LZ Sally I visited the headquarters of the 1st ARVN Division and called on the division commander. He was 38-year-old Major General Ngo Quang Truong. Division commander since 1966 and highly regarded by Americans in Vietnam,[21] he received me cordially.

The area of operations of the 2d Brigade was entirely within the 1st Division Tactical Area. I told General Truong of my 1963-64 experience as a division advisor. I assured him of my commitment to operate in the closest harmony with his division and with the province regional force (RF[22]) and popular force (PF[23]) units that as DTA commander he commanded. I told him of my intent to have my operations staff visit daily the command post of his 3d Regiment, and to invite the regimental commander and his advisor, or their representatives, to sit in on my daily briefings at LZ Sally.

I saw to it that, whenever a district town was in a battalion commander's area of operation, he would set up his command post alongside the district chief. This fostered the exchange of intelligence and the coordination of operations.

To *maintain unrelenting pressure on the enemy* was my natural bent. It was stressed by General Barsanti, who never let up. My battalion commanders got the message. They saw to it that their company commanders continuously searched for contact.

At night, if a company was not in contact and it was time to set up a night position the company halted. After it was good and dark the company moved silently to another location a couple of hundred yards away and set up. If the enemy chose to mortar the company that night, the rounds would land on an empty position.

We thought that our pattern of ambushes also put pressure on the enemy. They made him cautious about his use of the night. When the occasion was right we operated at night.

A vignette. Major Ray Riggan, my brigade S-2, was doing a good job, but in a manner of speaking I was my own S-2, always looking for a way to do the enemy in. The lieutenant

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[21] Before taking command of the 1st Division, General Truong had spent twelve years in Vietnam's Airborne Brigade He would rise to three-star rank. MACV commander General Abrams has said that Truong was capable of commanding an American division. General Schwarzkopf has written that he was "the most brilliant tactical commander I'd ever known... He was revered by his officers and troops and feared by those North Vietnamese commanders who knew of his ability." In the next decades we would become the best of friends.

[22] Company size, with rifles, mortars and machine guns.

[23] Platoon size, with rifles only.

commanding our attached radio research unit knew that. One day he came to me with the word that his monitors had just intercepted an enemy transmission that told us that enemy sampans would be moving sizable reinforcements down a certain canal that night. The canal's location was in code. It happened that in a recent action we had captured a leader's code book with which we could break the coded message. The canal was in the 1-502's area. I called Jack Bishop. I said "Get your recon platoon out there and see if you can set up an ambush." Lieutenant John Hay (call sign Bad Boy), commanding that platoon, ambushed a convoy of sampans that night and thoroughly shot it up. That was the way we put pressure on the enemy at night.

INTERVIEWER: Did you also get good intelligence from the district chiefs?

GENERAL CUSHMAN: Yes. They began to see that if they gave us good intelligence we would quickly do something with it. When our encirclement tactics begin to succeed, intelligence began to flow readly and all concerned began looking for opportunities. That turned out to be one of the secrets of our success.

After two encirclements, we adopted our third principle: A*t every opportunity surrounded the enemy and destroy them.* We got better as we went.

INTERVIEWER: When did you have your next encirclement?

GENERAL CUSHMAN: In mid-April the 2d Brigade's command post moved back to LZ Sally. We took over our old, still Viet Cong infested, operations area. The 1-502 was pulled by division for another mission. The 2-501 and the 2-17 Cav were still on the move, when I learned that the 1-501, still at Quang Dien, had an encirclement opportunity.

Alongside the district chief, on 16 April LTC Prokup received intelligence that two NVA companies had been located; they were in adjoining hamlets. Reacting well, he began to encircle them both, moving two nearby companies into position. He lifted a third company and his recon platoon to join the encirclement. We had nothing to reinforce him with.The 1-502 had gone away; the 2-501 was still moving and the 2-17 was too distant. Late in the day he pulled his fourth company off security at the An Lo bridge and lifted it to join. When night fell he had still not completed an encirclement. The two hamlets were too big; their southern sector was open. The 2d Brigade was out of rifle companies. Wayne had used all he had.

The next day, when A-2-501 arrived by truck from FSB Hardcore, I lifted it into a position to the hamlets' south, opcon to the 1-501. Enemy were still in the hamlets. The 1-501 attacked, killing 40 NVA and gathering 40 individual weapons, but took no prisoners. From an agent report Major Riggan, brigade S-2, believed that in the two hamlets there had been 200 enemy, in two companies of the 7th Battalion, 90 NVA Regiment. Frustrating.

Although we later listed this operation among our encirclements, companies had not "locked arms" around the enemy with no gaps whatever and they had not lined them-

selves up in two-man foxholes placed no more then 10 meters apart, keeping one man awake. Along with continuous illumination, this had been our recipe for success in the encirclement of the 2-501 the week before.

By then I had decided that, most of all, my brigade's exploitation of an opportunity for encirclement called for intense yet controlled energy on my part, not necessarily in the encirclement's detailed tactical direction (although I may occasionally have to be quite specific with my encirclement battalion commander) but in the gathering and direction of resources – helicopters, firepower, and reinforcing units, including RF/PF forces from wherever they could be found – and in my driving motivation of all concerned to insure that the loop was tightly closed around the enemy before dark, when we could turn on the lights.

Another opportunity would soon arise. On 20 April the 2-501 replaced the 1-501 at Quang Dien. The next afternoon its C Company engaged an enemy squad that was thought to be part of a perhaps company-size force, in two hamlets. Dick Tallman ordered nearby D Company into position to the hamlets' northeast. He ordered B Company to be lifted to their southwest and A Company likewise to their northwest. By nightfall the four companies had established an encirclement with the required two-man foxholes. The area was illuminated with flares delivered by artillery, helicopters, and USAF aircraft. During the night the enemy fought the encircling force and attempted to escape.

The next day a psyops team broadcast surrender messages, without effect. Supported by air and artillery, A Company attacked into one hamlet; intense enemy fire blocked its advance. Meanwhile in blocking positions the other companies of the 2-501 were receiving heavy enemy fire. When I had to tell Dick Tallman to divert B-2-501 to another mission, I arranged for the 1st ARVN Division's Black Panther Company to take its place. By nightfall one RF company and five PF platoons had further reinforced the encirclement.

On April 23 and 24, the 2-501 conducted coordinated attacks into the two hamlets and completed the destruction of the enemy. 2-501 casualties in these four days were 12 WIA. the NVA enemy lost 74 KIA and 1 POW.

<u>INTERVIEWER</u>: What impact did these encirclements have on the enemy?

<u>GENERAL CUSHMAN:</u> On 28 April the Quang Dien district chief remarked at a ceremony that, according to a recently captured NVA prisoner, his local enemy commander had told his unit that when they get in heavy contact with airborne troops they must make every effort to stop the advance of the airborne during the day and get out of the area during the night because the paratroopers will fight through the night and defeat them.

In a message that we found, an enemy regimental commander had written, "Stay away from the airborne. If you get in contact with the airborne, they'll surround you and destroy you. Get away from them as fast as you can."

At about this time at my command post I passed by an ongoing interrogation of a captured enemy soldier. I saw the prisoner pointing at the Screaming Eagle patch on a nearby trooper. I asked the interpreter what the enemy soldier was saying. His reply: "He is saying 'that little bird is real mean.'" So we built an archway over the steps leading down into our TOC and placed on it a sign, "That Little Bird Is Real Mean."

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about the encirclement at Phuoc Yen.

GENERAL CUSHMAN: On April 28 I was told that the Black Panther Company, working with the 1-501, had received intense fire from an enemy force at the north, or open, end of the "stocking" formed by the Song Bo river around that village (see sketch next page). The enemy was estimated as at least company size. (See [1] on the sketch, next page. Made at the time, it was used to tell the story of our five days of battle.)

Seeing an opportunity for an encirclement, I told LTC Jim Hunt, who had only recently taken command of the 1-501, that I was ordering A Company, 1-502, on duty at the An Lo bridge, to be inserted alongside the Black Panther Company. Attached to the 1-501, it was to close the gap between the Black Panther's left flank and the Song Bo. I told Jim to take advantage of the river to build an encirclement around the trapped enemy.

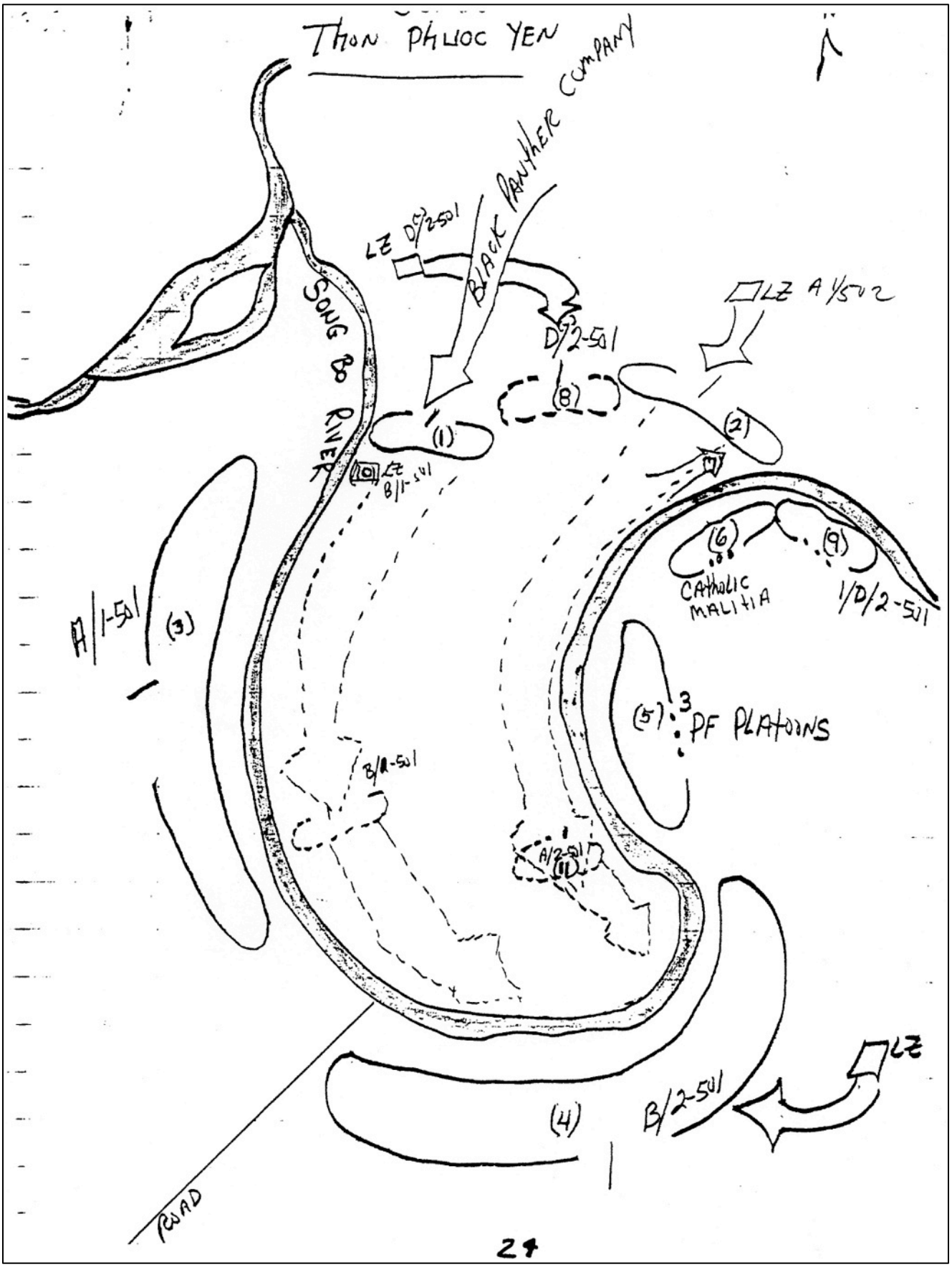
Jim Hunt moved his A Company overland to the Song Bo's bank west of Phuoc Yen village. I ordered B-2-501 lifted to an LZ from which Jim could place that company on the river's bank south of the village. Night was coming on. To cover the east bank of the Song Bo, I visited the Huong Tra district chief. I arranged with him the stationing of three PF platoons plus a platoon of Catholic militia from a nearby hamlet.

Night was falling as I met Captain Terry Spiegelberg, commanding A-1-502, as his company landed. I pointed out the hedgerow that his company must occupy. Thirty minutes later, and guided by my helicopter overhead, he had troops on the Song Bo's bank preparing two-man foxholes. We had already called for night-long illumination. An encirclement was in place.

On May 3, after defeating a last enemy attempt to escape, the 2d Brigade with Vietnamese forces had destroyed the 8th Battalion, 90th NVA Regiment. Enemy losses: 429 KIA, 107 POW, 117 weapons, and a battalion's full radio suite. US losses: 8 KIA, 44 WIA. ARVN losses: 3 KIA, 12 WIA.

We received this: FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

"The resounding vctory of Black Panther Company and elements of the 101st Airborne Division at 7 KM NW Of Hue from the period of29 April to 1 May 1968 has caused heavy casualties to the enemy in lives lost as well as in weapons captured. The whole enemy battalion was Hors De Combat. This brilliant victory reflects highly the honor of the ARVN and Allied Forces. It is requested that the Commsnding General of I Corps convey my warmest congratulations to all. President Nguyen Van Thieu sends."


THON PHUOC YEN
BLACK PANTHER COMPANY
LZ D/2-501
SONG BE RIVER
D/2-501
LZ A/5-12
(8)
(1)
(2)
LZ B/1-501
(6)
(9)
CATHOLIC MALITIA
1/D/2-501
A/1-501
(3)
(5) 3 PF PLATOONS
B/1-501
A/2-501
(7)
LZ
(4)
B/2-501
ROAD
24

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL BY MG O.M. BARSANTI, CG, 101ST ABN DIV

1. It gives me extreme pleasure to forward this message, and to add my heartiest congratulations to those of President Nguyen Van Thieu.

2. The victory at Phuoc Yen has now brought congratulations from the very highest levels of the Republic of Vietnam government. This action is recognized as a classic example of swift concentration of force, complete encirclement, and relentless destruction of the enemy. It was indeed well done.

Two more encirclements came the next week.

On 3 May we learned that documents captured at Phuoc Yen revealed that the trapped 8th Battalion, 90th NVA Regiment, had called for reinforcements. They were to move into Ap Pho Nam and another hamlet in Quang Dien district, amidst some streams. Dick Tallman, his command post at Quang Dien, moved out. He air assaulted his B Company into the area making immediate contact. He inserted his C Company to B's left and inserted his recon platoon to its right. I chopped to him C Company of the 1-501. He air assaulted it into an LZ north of the two hamlets from which it could link up with B-2-501's flank which was on a stream. Then I gave him A-1-502, just returned to LZ Sally from Phuoc Yen, to be inserted with its right flank alongside C-1-501's left. A combat assault by Dick's own D Company, to where it could fill the space between C-2-501 on its left and A-1-502 on its right, completed the encirclement. The enemy attempted to break out, without success; we had turned on the lights. We were getting good at this.

The next day, May 4, the 1-502 returned from duty with the 1st Brigade and, with its command post at Quang Dien replacing the 2-501, assumed responsibility for the action. B-1-502 relieved D-2-501 and the 1-502's recon platoon replaced that of 2-501. We pounded the enemy with artillery and 20 sorties of tactical air during the day. Illumination was overhead during the night. The enemy was trapped. Firing small arms and mor-

tars he tried to escape using the streams; he could not. (We had learned at Phuoc Yen that to block escape through water routes troops securing river banks must "have one foot in the water'" and must explode grenades and M79 rounds in the water as well.) The next day we swept both hamlets. US losses: 2-501, 2 KIA and 13 WIA; 1-502, 1 KIA and 1 WIA. Enemy: 33 NVA/VC KIA, 2 POW.

On 5 May the district chief at Huong Tra reported that NVA in strength were holed up in La Chu southeast of LZ Sally. Dick Tallman's 2-501 command post was now at the nearby LZ Pinky. I gave him D-1-501 to establish contact with the NVA force at the hamlet's north. By nightfall Dick had air assaulted his own B and C companies and the 1-501's C Company, which I had chopped also to him, to join D-1-501 in a four company encirclement. With lights on the enemy was again unable to break out.

On May 6 I brought in Julius Becton's 2-17 Cav (to which now was attached an M-48 tank platoon from the 5th Mech Division) and told him to take La Chu. After Dick Tallman had pulled back the rifle companies on the encirclement's east, west, and south sides, and after an artillery preparation and four air strikes, the 2-17 attacked south, D-1-501 on the right and B-2-17 (with tanks and M-113 armored personnel carriers) on the left. A-2-17 swung around to attack the hamlet from the east.

After-action report: "Progress was slow as the troops made a thorough search of a vast network of bunkers and trenches, A Troop came abreast of B Troop [and with D-1-501] advanced … at 1930 they met heavy resistance… Intense fighting continued under continuous illumination as the units advanced slowly and attacked the well-entrenched enemy… By 2400 only a small pocket remained to be cleared. However, the remnants of the die-hard enemy fought stubbornly and it was not until approximately 0100 that the final series of bunkers had been overrun... all firing had ceased at 0200. A sweep of the area at first light revealed that a force consisting of elements of the C115 Local Force Company and the 9th Battalion, 90th Infantry Regiment had been destroyed." US casualties: 2 KIA,14 WIA, Enemy losses: 53 NVA/VC KIA, 2 POW; 26 indiv/crew weapons captured.

Sergeant Robert M. Patterson of B Troop, 2/17 Cavalry, received a Medal of Honor for his actions that day.

INTERVIEWER: Were you ever unsuccessful?

GENERAL CUSHMAN: Yes. Soon after La Chu on the night of 11-12 May we received intelligence of a suspected enemy regimental headquarters five kilometers north of LZ Sally, at Ap Co Thap hamlet. My three battalion commanders were either not nearby or were engaged with the enemy. C-1-501 was stationed at the An Lo bridge. Julius Becton's 2-17 Cav command post was at Camp Evans where he had his two mounted troops and an attached tank platoon.[24]

I don't remember what Jim Hunt was doing at the time but I do know that I ordered that C-1-501 be moved to Ap Co Thap. I told Julius to get the 2-17 going to Ap Co Thap. I chopped C-1-501 to Julius. He was to be in command of an encirclement.

That turned out to have been a mistake. The 2-17 Cav troops knew nothing of what our rifle companies by then well understood about encirclement tactics. His squadron was accustomed to operating independently, most often under division control. In his two months with the 2d Brigade I had generally given him a free hand. His nature was to bridle at my command methods, especially those I used when I was urgently seeking to close the ring of an encirclement.

In any event, the 2-17 Cav was still on the move from Camp Evans when before noon C-1-501 was in heavy contact at the south end of Ap Co Thap. Sensing that we were on to

[24] This narrative is based on my memory and on a five page, somewhat confusing, account in my A Personal Memoir. See footnote, page 1.

something big, I told Jim Hunt to move his A and D companies to the scene overland to be attached to the 2-17 Cav. Likewise I ordered the lift of Jim's B Company and D Company of the 1-502 to selected LZs at that location. Disregarding what Julius Becton might intend to do, I got into detail about how the companies should link up. Julius, on the command net, knew what was going on, but he was not running the battle. By nightfall with four rifle companies we had encircled about 9/10 of Ap Co Thap.

Meanwhile the 2/17 had was becoming heavily engaged with part of the same enemy force at the north end of Ap Co Thap. In a fierce action managed by Julius Becton, it had reported two tanks hit by RPGs, one of them destroyed. As night fell the troops of the 2-17 Cav and the attached tank platoon went into their night positions, making no effort to close the missing 1/10 of our encirclement and leading to heated traffic on my command net. Before dawn an enemy battalion had slipped away. I was madder than hell.[25]

INTERVIEWER: About your command methods, did you ever relieve a commander?

GENERAL CUSHMAN: In May Dick Tallman received orders to the USARV staff. His replacement was new to Vietnam. He was fresh out of the Army War College and had not been with troops for some time. It took me only a couple of days to see that it would be too much for him. Our operations were too high tempo and too tightly coordinated for me to take the time to break him in. I told General Barsanti that he wouldn't do. The 2-501's executive officer was Major Tony Heiter. He had come down from the division G-3 section four months earlier. Tony was due to be promoted to lieutenant colonel. Division put him in command of the battalion.[26]

INTERVIEWER: What happened after your disappointment at Ap Co Thap?

GENERAL CUSHMAN: On May 14 I was told that we would take over the AO of Task Force X-Ray, a Marine Corps command. Our mission was to provide security for a POL tank farm on the beach at Col Co and the pipeline that took the fuel to depots near Hue. I assigned the mission to Jim Hunt's 1-501. That afternoon C-1-501 deployed by air to Phu Vang as the first contingent; A-1-321 Arty joined it. That day I visited the Thua Thien province chief. I discussed with him how we could work with his RF companies and with the PF platoons and hamlet militia of Phu Vang and Hung Thuy districts to accomplish the mission of the 2d Brigade in our new AO.

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[25] Jim White, brigade S-4, told me in a 1995 telephone call that back in the brigade mess I was, in his words, "furious" at Julius Becton for his part in our failure to exploit an opportunity for a major encirclement. I probably was. Inasmuch as I had handled the operation badly from its very start, I had only myself to blame. I soon cooled off. I had considerable respect for Julius then and have ever since. I expect our respective stories of the event differ to this day.

[26] Cleo Hogan had gone with Dick Tallman on R&R while all this was happening. In his diary Cleo wrote that when he got back one of his lieutenants told him that during the heat of an operation "Colonel Cushman had somehow gotten crosswise with the new commander who said on the command net, 'Get off my back and let me run my battalion.' Whereupon Colonel Cushman was heard to say, "You don't have a battalion" and landed in D Company's area and took him out." That may well be true but I don't remember it.

I stopped by the command post of the Marine battalion that we would relieve. Its area of oerations was sizable.. I was surprised to learn that, while Marine rifle companies were 20% larger than those of the 2d Brigade, the battalion had three of its four companies in static positions and only one out and operating. The consequences of this were evident; the enemy roamed the countryside at night without interference from the Marines. I told Jim Hunt to turn that around.

Jim put one platoon at the fire base of A-1-321 Arty at the edge of Phu Vang's district town where his command post was located. With the fire base's occupants and with nearby PFs, that platoon would both secure the fire base and perform the daily mine sweep of the road to Col Co beach. The rest of that company would secure the beach's pipeline terminus, enjoying the beach by day. The other 1-501 companies would rotate that duty. Three 1-501 companies could then operate night and day in the AO. From our experience working with district chiefs and their PF platoons I was confident that, if we gave them fire support and a rapid reaction force, we could rely on the PF for road and pipeline patrols and for ambushes that would imperil any enemy sneaking around localities that it was our duty to protect.

On 16 May the 1-501 moved into position. Its units began scouring the countryside by day and, to the enemy's surprise, setting ambushes at night. The first of frequent ambushes was sprung the night of May 17.

The 2-17 Cav joined us with its own field artillery battery and two attached platoons, one of tanks and one of USMC Ontos (several jeeps, each mounting six 106mm recoilless rifles). With this rather formidable armored force the 2-17 set up its firebase (FSB Forward).

Meanwhile, the 2-501's and 1-502's[27] AOs north of Hue had become relatively quiet -- so much so that one company of the 2-501 conducted live-fire training exercises to orient new personnel.

<u>INTERVIEWER</u>: What kind of operations were you doing in your AO south of Hue?

<u>GENERAL CUSHMAN</u>: On May 20 the 1-501 executed its first encirclement. Its B Company made the initial contact, joined by A and D Companies and then by C-2-501 which we lifted in from north of Hue. From the after-action report: "…under constant illumination the encircled enemy, identified as elements of the 810th Local Force Battalion, vainly attempted to escape... US casualties, 12 WIA. The enemy lost 65 KIA, 2 POW."

On May 26 the 2-17 Cav had a sharp fight that led to my putting A-1-501 opcon to it. Julius Becton put that company in a combat assault six kilometers south of FSB Forward to join his B-2-17. He reinforced these units with a Marine Ontos platoon, a Marine tank platoon, and a tank platoon from C-2-34 Armor. With this task force, on May 27 he cooperated with an ARVN cavalry troop and three companies of the ARVN 3d Infantry Regi-

[27] Jack Bishop would soon become division G-3, turning his battalion over to LTC Leslie D. Carter, Jr.

ment to sweep southeast through a chain of hamlets. A-1-501 made a combat assault and then picked up a PF platoon to set up a blocking position at the last hamlet. Results were good.

On May 27 at a hamlet called Thon Le Xa Dong, the 1-501 with two companies plus its recon platoon reinforced by a PF platoon, and employing D-1-502 ilifted in from north of Hue, attempted to encircle an enemy force. It used all-night illumination, but without success; somehow the bulk of the enemy slipped out. Results were meager.

On May 30, we had another chance at Le Xa Dong. A-2-17 Cav made the initial contact at the north and west sides of the hamlet. I arranged for a company of the 3d ARVN Regiment, to block at its south. Opcon to the 2-17 Cav, B-1-501 assaulted into an LZ east of the hamlet and a platoon of C-1-501 did likewise to the north. We pounded the encircled enemy with artillery. From the after,action report: "Continuous illumination was provided… During the night attempts to escape were driven back… At first light the enemy attempted to escape through the ARVN position. When that attempt failed, the enemy in desperation tried to get out to the north; there it was blocked by the platoon from C-1-501. At daylight the encircling units advanced and destroyed or captured the defeated and demoralized NVA/VC.

Friendly casualties: 6 US WIA, 2 PF KIA and 2 PF WIA. Enemy losses: to US Forces, 91 NVA/VC KIA and 12 POW, 30 individual and 6 crew-served weapons captured; to ARVN forces: 65 NVA/VC KIA and 22 POW, 30 individual and 9 crew-served weapons captured." We had dealt the enemy south of Hue a devastating blow.

General Truong commanding the 1st ARVN Division had asked that the 2d Brigade operate with Vietnamese forces southward to attack enemy in the heavily infested shoreline of Phu Tu district. He set up RVN Task Force 7, commanded by the Thua Thien province chief in his capacity as sector commander. Its composition:

3d Sqdn, 7th Cav Regt (ARVN)
12th Coastal Group, (RVN Navy)
3d Bn, 3d Inf Regt (ARVN)
13th Coastal Group, (RVN Navy)
Black Panther Co, 1st ARVN Div

I set up two task forces under brigade control, TF 1/501 Inf and TF 2-17 Cav. Each was a mix of air assault infantry, mounted air cavalry, and attached Marine platoons (Ontos, Tank, Amtrac). The combined operation jumped off on June 1. ARVN and 2d Brigade elements operated together on land with air support. RVN patrol boats offshore prevented enemy escape.

By nightfall Julius Becton's TF 2-17 had encircled an enemy with three rifle companies and two cavalry troops. We turned on the lights. That night the enemy sought vainly to break out overland. RVN Navy boats on patrol captured several prisoners. The combined attack continued. Psyops appeals to surrender were broadcast. After another night the battles of TF 2/17 and TF 7 were over.

Results [28]: US 5 KIA 36 WIA, ARVN 2 KIA 5 WIA; 235 NVA/VC KIA, 77 NVA/VC POW.

This action was the end of heavy fighting in my time as brigade commander.

Our AO became quiet. Our 2d Brigade task force, in the encirclement operations that had become its trademark, along with its other operations day by day, and working hand in hand with Vietnamese forces, had been instrumental in bringing peace to the countryside. Farmers tilled their fields and harvested their rice with little interference.

On June 17th, 1968, the brigade task force had no soldier killed and none were wounded.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about your final weeks in command.

GENERAL CUSHMAN: I called on General Truong in mid-June. He invited me to his division's Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces Day celebration June 19. He said, "...and please bring your colors."

On that day the Republic of Vietnam's President Nguyen Van Thieu placed his country's streamer of the Cross of Gallantry with Palm on the 2d Brigade colors. He presented me with the same award. The later citation in the Department of the Army general order named every unit of the 2d Brigade Task Force as receiving the award.

Vietnam brigade commanders were generally scheduled for replacement after about six months commanding in-theater. I was no exception. Ambassador Robert Komer, Deputy COMUSMACV for CORDS, had asked me to join him in July. That had been arranged. Colonel John (Jack) Hoefling was scheduled to take command of the 2d Brigade.

About then I got word that my wife Nancy, who had broken her hip in May, was having serious problems and that I was needed at home. My request for compassionate leave was granted. In a change of command ceremony at LZ Sally on June 28, Jack Hoefling assumed command of the 2d Brigade. I left for home in Lexington, MA.[29]

INTERVIEWER: You were a very good brigade commander. Why do you think that was?

GENERAL CUSHMAN: I think that, first of all, I had good judgment. I think that my battle instincts were good and that my battle decisions were generally so. Jack Duncan, my mentor at Fort Belvoir,[30] had been right.

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[28] It was at about this time that Frank Garrison, division G2, told me that at a recent MACV commanders' meeting, General Abrams had remarked to General Barsanti that the 101st had shown how to use armor.

[29] On my trip home I was on orders escorting the body of Colonel Dick Pohl, commander of the 101st Division Artillery, to West Point for burial. He had been killed in a helicopter accident.

[30] Chapter Seven, page 7-5.

Second, I had determination and intensity. Focused on the enemy, I never let up. I believe that a battle commander must not only be a warrior. While not taking counsel of his fears, he must also be a worrier. I never stopped thinking about the enemy -- what he might do and how we could do him in.

INTERVIEWER: What faults did you have?

GENERAL CUSHMAN: I was too hard on my commanders, too demanding. They were good men and doing their best. My motivational leadership techniques were flawed. Leadership doesn't mean being loved or popular. But it is about being effective without being a horse's ass while you are at it. Maybe I failed a bit at that.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have any regrets?

GENERAL CUSHMAN: Yes, in how I handled a couple of my people. Earl Keesling, my executive officer wanted to command a battalion. He was a satisfactory exec and got his job done. I didn't think he was strong enough to command a battalion. I did not recommend that he be given command. He finally went elsewhere in the division where he got command of a battalion. I don't think he ever forgave me. I regretted that.

Another action I regret is how I replaced Russ Miller, my S3, who had served me well. Jim Waldeck, battalion S3 in another brigade in the 101st, had been with me my first tour in Vietnam with the 21st ARVN Division. He was my kind of guy. I brought him in as my brigade S3 and Russ went to division G-3 and then to work for Dick Tallman in Saigon. Russ and I met later at Fort Benning. In a moment of frankness he told me that he had been personally hurt at being replaced.

INTERVIEWER: Why did you replace Major Miller?

GENERAL CUSHMAN: I thought that Jim Waldeck would be better. Russ was a little slower, a little less bright, and less aggressive.

INTERVIEWER: What advice would you offer to a commander in a similar situation?

GENERAL CUSHMAN: I would say try to do what's in the best interest of the command.

INTERVIEWER: Which of your subordinates were you close to?

GENERAL CUSHMAN: I had a really good command sergeant major, CSM A.B. Cannon. He had been a pathfinder in the 82d at Normandy. He went with me everywhere. His suggestions and advice regarding the troops were invaluable. He and my brigade PSNCO, SFC George Bos, also took care of my well-being. My faithful radio operator, Russell Prickett, saw to it that I got a basin of hot water to shave with every morning.

Once Prickett and I were out with some engaged troops and I saw a soldier wearing a pair of tattered boots. He had been out in the mud and water for so long that the soles were coming off. I said, "Prickett, give that man your boots." He took off his boots, gave them to the soldier, and walked back to our helicopter barefoot.

INTERVIEWER: What had been your losses?

GENERAL CUSHMAN: Of course every loss was a hurt. Losses that stemmed from failure to take care, such as an overrun base or a mortar miscalculation, particularly hurt. In the hard fighting after Tet our losses were considerable. Sometimes we lost an especially well regarded man, such as when in February Lieutenant Dick Pershing, a platoon leader in A-1-502, was killed. He was the grandson of "Black Jack" Pershing [General John Joseph Pershing]. Every loss was bad but that one really hurt. Our losses were never bad enough to destroy unit integrity. We always had replacements coming in.

INTERVIEWER: What was your opinion of the quality of the replacements?

GENERAL CUSHMAN: Good. The junior enlisted men were generally not parachute qualified but they fit right in. Morale and motivation continued excellent.

INTERVIEWER: How did you handle complying with the Law of Land Warfare?

GENERAL CUSHMAN: We treated prisoners strictly according to the Army field manual that cited the Geneva Convention. After interrogating them according to those rules we evacuated them to the division MPs right away.

When we operated in hamlets there was no way to avoid civilian casualties. Artillery and air support was essential to a rifle company's fighting with minimum casualties to itself. Sometimes civilians had left the locale where the fight was. I aimed not to overdo indirect firepower. It was not indiscriminate, but it did cause many civilian casualties.

We counseled our troops not to fire on civilians. One day I was following a platoon that was moving through a hamlet. I saw a 10-year-old Vietnamese girl sitting on the ground, weeping. In her arms was an old man in white, perhaps her grandfather. He was dead, shot by one of our soldiers. I found the platoon leader. He told me that when shot the man had been running away. I told the lieutenant to tell his men to be more careful.

INTERVIEWER: The operation at Vinh Loc had all the hallmarks of one of your encirclement operations.

GEN CUSHMAN: Yes. Jack Hoefling ran that one. It involved, and was well coordinated with, both the ARVN and the RVN Navy. They wiped out an enemy base area at Vinh Loc. Jack and I became good friends later on. After I retired I called on him in Germany. He was a major general. He said to me, "Jack, that outfit you left behind couldn't have been any better. It was the best outfit I had ever run into. They did everything I told them and they did it well. They were trained to figure out all the answers."Not long after I left, Gen-

eral Zais [General Melvin Zais] replaced General Barsanti. Jack Hoefling told me that General Zais once castigated him by saying, "That isn't the way Cushman would have done it."

INTERVIEWER: What did you learn as a brigade commander?

GEN CUSHMAN: It was the only combat I experienced during my career. I did not consider my two tours as an advisor as "combat." Commanding the 2nd Brigade was where I got my Combat Infantryman Badge. For four of my ten months commanding I had been at Fort Campbell, so I only commanded in combat for six months. I was grateful for that much.

I don't know how well I would have done in a higher intensity environment like the Korean War or World War Two. I think I would have figured it out. I learned that I could solve the tactical problems presented to me. I thrived on command responsibility. I left with confidence that I could solve any problem.

INTERVIEWER: What did you learn about leadership?

GEN CUSHMAN: I am a very demanding person. I have high standards. I learned that while I was good at getting things done my leadership techniques were not exactly superior. The 2d Brigade veterans of 1967-68 have met at many reunions at Fort Campbell. I get appreciative compliments.

INTERVIEWER: Did your ways change in Vietnam?

GEN CUSHMAN: I think I matured considerably. By the time I left, I felt that I was on top of my job, that we had become an outstanding brigade. I was confident in my abilities. I could see the results. I didn't always do what I should have done, but I followed my instincts and that got great results. I developed a team of people who were willing to work with me and had confidence in my judgment. I was a good leader and I took care of my men. So did General Barsanti, but he had a different leadership style.

INTERVIEWER: You have written that on occasion General Barsanti's behavior was shameful. That's a strong word.

GEN CUSHMAN: General Barsanti occasionally chewed out a subordinate while on the division command net. He even did that with his division chief of staff, Bill Tallon. Once we were in the brigade command post and he was really working someone over. My S3 turned off the radio and said, "We don't have to listen to that."

Although he threatened to relieve people often, I never knew him to actually relieve anyone. Once, angry with me, he told me over the telephone that he was coming down, implying that he would then relieve me. When his helicopter arrived at my command post he got out and put his arm around my shoulder.

In my A Personal Memoir, I wrote this:

General Barsanti was a hard driving, mission oriented commander who had performed with distinction in combat in two wars; his sound tactical and operational insight certainly had my respect. However he had an explosive temper that often led them to mistreat badly his staff. But he recognized quality work, and he could see that the people immediately around him were giving him that. So although he berated them often and publicly, and virtually daily threatened one or another of them with relief, in reality he showed more patience than his often shameful manner conveyed. General Barsanti was personally courageous and cared deeply for his men. Although working for him could not be called a pleasure, neither is war a pleasure. He aimed for results, and from his division he got results.

Shameful may not be the right word. But when General Barsanti came out of the field one day, his orderly did not have the hot water ready for him to take a shower. He wrote the orderly a nasty note telling him what a poor soldier he was. That orderly took the note to an inspector general. I'm sure that did not help General Barsanti. He returned to the States to become the second in command at Fifth Army. After that he retired.

He was fearless, nine Purple Heart medals altogether. He cared about his men and about getting the job done. At the dinner that he organized for my farewell, I presented him with an AK-47 with a plaque that said, "Captured by the 2d Brigade on a night ambush." I told him, "General, it was your leadership that led us to that night ambush." Nonetheless, in some important ways he was a poor example of a leader.

Despite that, when I later commanded Fort Campbell I named our new guest house the Barsanti House. He was then one of the only two division commanders of the 101st who had taken the division to war. He had died by then. We asked Mrs. Barsanti and his daughter Betty to come down for the dedication ceremony. I thought it was a proper tribute to General Barsanti.

INTERVIEWER: How did you manage your relationship with him?

GENERAL CUSHMAN: I was direct with him. I told him what I thought. He began to realize that we were pretty good. I think that after a while he took pride in the 2d Brigade.

INTERVIEWER: What advice would you offer someone who was in a similar situation of having to deal with a demanding and sometimes abusive commander?

GENERAL CUSHMAN: You put up with it. You endure. You stand your ground. The main thing you have to do is to produce. If he comes to believe that you're not productive, you're in trouble.

INTERVIEWER: Did his behavior ever cause you to have less confidence in your chain of command? Did it make it more difficult to function as a team?

GENERAL CUSHMAN: No. We were a very good division. The division did very well in Vietnam. They went there with a strong can do attitude and a good tactical grasp and that lasted.

INTERVIEWER: What was your opinion of the progress made in Vietnam? Were we winning, losing or marking time by the summer of 1968?

GENERAL CUSHMAN: When I left I thought that the United States still had a good chance of having a successful outcome. The South Vietnamese government had stabilized. The NVA Tet offensive had been defeated. In Thua Thien, government control had been restored in the countryside. The CORDS program was gaining momentum nationwide. But back in the United States public opinion was turning against the Vietnam endeavor.

In my 1965 National War College paper I had written that to block the Ho Chi Minh trail was essential to success in Vietnam. But the trail, still intact in 1968, grew into a veritable highway and Vietnam eventually fell.