

*Call Sign: Patty Shell*

*Composition: 1 off, 6 enl – Curry, Grant, Nelson, Hayes, Nottage, Sigler, Quaid*

*Synopsis: 6 sightings of 17 VC/NVA, 1 base camp, comm. wire, sleeping platform, 2 caves, footprints, and 1 harbor site, negative fire missions*

*Observation of Enemy and Terrain:*

*Mar. 25 – 12:30 p.m. Team sighted natural rock formation with 2 man sleeping platform underneath constructed of bamboo measuring 4X5 ft. and old area had been previously bombed and platform not used in 3-4 months. Area provided good natural canopy/cover and was not visible from the air.*

*4:45 p.m. Team sighted 2 caves, 1 measuring 6 ft. high, 15 ft. deep and 10 ft. wide capable of holding 3 men. Caves consisted of natural rock formations on side of hill and were not man made. Caves were reinforced with bamboo poles and appeared to have been used by the enemy at one time but were recently used by friendly infantry due to the team discovering ration cans, 1 plastic canteen and 1 demolition kit bag laying around the area.*

*March 28 – 12:30 p.m. Team sighted 1 base camp measuring 125X100 meters consisting of 9 hootches with hospital and mess hall, 7 bunkers, 3 storage/fighting*



holes, 2 rifles and numerous documents and gear. First area measuring 30X40 ft. consisting of 4 hooches measuring 12X30 ft. and constructed of bamboo thatched together with twine and 3 bunkers measuring 6X20X6 ft. Bunkers were situated under hooches and hooches were spaced 15-30 ft apart. First base camp area had not been recently used. Second area of base camp measured 100X50 ft. and consisted of 3 hooches measuring 12X30 ft. and constructed of bamboo thatched together with twine and 4 bunkers situated under hooches measuring 6X20X6 ft. All bunkers in the base camp areas were dug under botches and reinforced with bamboo poles along walls. Second area also had 1 hospital and 1 mess hall both measuring 20X30 ft. and constructed of bamboo. Mess hall contained tables measuring 6X3 ft. with plates on them and freshly cooked rice in pot and 2 plates that had recently been eaten out of. Hospital contained numerous bottles of medicine, numerous documents, assorted clothes, 1 SKS rifle and 1 bolt action rifle, both rusty. Mess hall and hospital were both capable of holding 25-30 men. Second base area also had 3 storage/fighting holes measuring 5X5X5 ft., 2 transistor radios with parts missing, 4 large rectangular shaped batteries measuring 6X3 inches and taped together and 2 NVA type canteens. Team also sighted in second base area 3 fresh piles of human defecation and 1 fresh set of foot prints heading East. Base areas were approximately 50-75 meters apart. Team took negative action due to lack of communication and moved out of the area. Team believed the enemy was reoccupying the second base camp area. Team took documents, rifles, samples of medicine and canteens with them.

5:30 p.m. Team sighted comm.. wire running parallel to trail SW-NE. Comm wire was situated 5 ft off the trail on NE side. Team also sighted C ration cans laying around area and believe infantry may have been in the area. Team followed comm. wire for 25 meters and cut wire.

Mar. 30 – 11:00 a.m. Team sighted 2 sets of fresh footprints heading SW on hard packed trail and 1 harbor site, recently used and large enough for 4-5 men situated off trail.

1:30 p.m. Team sighted 17 VC/NVA wearing green utilities and mixed PJs carrying 16 large packs and at least 5 rifles. Point man wore green shorts, green utility shirt and NVA helmet and carried an AK-47. Enemy group consisted of men and women. Enemy were moving S, 50 meters NW of team's position. Team took negative action due to lack of communications. Team moved out of the area to ridgeline and establish communications and called AO. AO came on station but could not relocate the enemy position.

*Terrain: Area was generally rolling to steep with 15-25 ft. single canopy and secondary growth of 4-6 ft. consisting of vines, small bushes, bamboo, boulders, thorn and thick bushes. Movement within patrol area was moderate averaging 200 meters per hour for a recon patrol. Water was plentiful in the area.*



There was no good LZ in which to insert us. The helicopter backed into a shell hole on the side of a hill and we disembarked. We came out of the helicopter and spread out to cover 180 degrees with the helicopter forming the other half of the circle. The team exited the helicopter in the order we walk. I clambered out behind the point man on to the rim of the shell hole and took up a firing position. I glanced to see my radioman follow me out, rifle first, on to the rim and then I focused on the terrain ahead for the insertion is the most vulnerable part of the mission. A shot rang out. I thought we were taking fire. It turned out the radioman had an accidental discharge. It must have missed me by inches. It was not a very auspicious beginning to our patrol.

We got our comm check with the birds as well as our replot giving us our map location and set off for the high ground. The whole area had been bombed out. We worked our way up to an old fire support base and, seeing no indication of the enemy, we reversed our course. I made a decision to walk through the bombed out area rather than take a long circuitous route through the jungle around the area.

We walked down the hill, across a small stream and into a wooded area. We no sooner stepped into the jungle than we spotted a base camp. Everyone froze. We silently watched the area for a while. Seeing no movement, I passed the word that we would circle the base camp and enter it from high ground. Three of us, point man, radioman, and me, took off and circled the camp. Fortunately, the base camp was old and deserted.

As we came back through the camp, I came face to face with Quad. He had his rifle sighted on me and was squeezing the trigger. The only thing that saved me was the unusual camouflage I had on my face. The



radioman, already on my shit list, hadn't passed the word to the rest of the team and they were left wondering where we had gone. When we popped up in the base camp, it had given them a scare. Although, nothing like the scare Quad gave me!

It was a relief to find the base camp deserted since we had exposed ourselves crossing the bombed out area and felt very vulnerable. The relief was short lived. No sooner had we left the old base camp than we walked right into another base camp. This one was in use. We found hooches with bunkers dug under them, a hospital and a mess hall. There were a couple of plates on the table with food half eaten and a pot of rice. There also was a latrine with fresh feces. Who ever had been there had seen us and fled.

We could get no communication with anyone which meant if we needed help we were in serious trouble. We searched the hooches and bunkers collecting all the documents we could find as well as samples of the medicine bottles, and then moved on.

Further on we found some c-rat cans and communication wire running along the trail which we felt our infantry had left. We cut the wire and continued to work our way through the area. We still had no communication which created some tension.

Over the next few days we found some well used trails. Crossing one, we came to a stream. The ground beyond the stream sloped sharply up. We needed to get to some high ground in order to reestablish communications with the Battalion. We also needed water.

The team crossed the stream. The bulk of the team had moved up the hill. I set out security looking in both directions as well as across the stream in the direction we had come. I was in the stream directing the security as well as the Marine filling everyone's canteens. I glanced up to an open area to my right in time to see a VC emerge from the jungle. We all hit the deck and froze. We were highly exposed lying in the stream. Quad, I think it was, whispered "shoot him lieutenant, shoot him." Then another VC emerged, and another, and another. At



this point Quad was whisper, “don’t shoot lieutenant, don’t shoot.” The problem was that we could get no more than three at a time in the clearing and we had no idea of how many there were that we couldn’t see. One of the VC pointed in our direction as we lay in the stream. We remained still. Had he moved his rifle, we would have killed him. We counted 17 plus enemy.

As soon as they quit crossing, I brought security in and we scrambled up the hill where we could get communications. By the time I got an AO on station, the VC were long gone. We did however, find a great ambush site along the trail. The one major problem with it was we still had no communications with Battalion. We set up in an ambush until it began to get dark and then we moved off to find a harbor site.

Battalion kept us there another day. They wanted to flip us with another team because it was difficult to find a secure Landing Zone. The following day the other team was inserted and we were extracted. The

bird couldn't land because of the terrain so the other team jumped off and we climbed up on the helicopter as it hovered.

The team we flipped with walked the trail, ran into VC, got into a fire fight and had to be extracted the day they were inserted. In our debriefing, I recommended the area be targeted for an Arc Light (B52s) bombing mission and that other teams should not be sent into the area because of the poor communication and lack of LZs.

