



Ashton

Intruders Perish

Widows' Village: VC Graveyard

By CPT Arnauld Fleming

It was called "Widows' Village," a quiet group of small shacks sitting across from the huge Long Binh Army complex. Widows and children of deceased ARVN soldiers lived there, existing on small government pensions. To boost their income, the widows took in laundry from the men of the adjacent Army installation. They lived in serenity, not bothered by the struggle around them—until the Viet Cong moved in.

Sometime prior to the beginning of the Vietnamese holiday season of Tet, the VC began to infiltrate the village. They evidently came in small groups, perhaps only two or three at a time. Never in a group large enough to attract attention. Some, after moving into the home of a widow, built small fighting bunkers and tunnels under the floors. One group strung out barbed wire in a tanglefoot pattern in an area between a few of the houses. Then, early on the morning of Jan. 31, they made their move.

Approximately a half mile away, the first platoon of Company B, 2d Mechanized Battalion, 47th Infantry was on alert status as the ready reaction force for that area. They had moved their Armored Personnel Carriers (APCs) into the big parking lot near the Post Exchange, and there they waited. Just prior to daylight, the word came. Rocket and mortar fire was being launched from the vicinity of Widows' Village toward the headquarters of II Field Force, Vietnam.

Deserted houses

The infantry raced to their APCs and roared out. Passing through the gate of the big compound, they headed north up Highway 1A into the southern edge of the village. Quickly deploying on line, they began moving up the dirt streets

of the village, past apparently deserted houses. About a third of the way through the town, they suddenly collided with a well-entrenched Viet Cong force.

The enemy struck at the mechanized infantry with rockets, automatic weapons and small arms fire. Platoon Sergeant William Butler, of Springfield, Mo., said, "We were moving slowly along the streets, because we knew there were Cong in there — we just couldn't locate them.

"Suddenly they began throwing everything at us. One of our tracks took a direct hit from a B-40 rocket and the platoon leader was killed."

As the senior man in the platoon, Butler took command and began moving his men out of the direct line of enemy fire. The big personnel carriers eased back into an area where they could be protected from the VC rocket rounds and still maintain suppressing fire on the enemy emplacements.

Bangalore torpedoes

While the men of the 47th enemy were held in place, the Viet



Tracks rout Communists

Ashton

area.

As Mechanized Infantry sweep

torpedoes to blast holes in the Austin, Tex., barbed wire surrounding into the village and linked Headquarters II FFV. The forces with Company B. Here enemy evidently was ready to they quickly made plans to launch his attack against the launch their attack against the huge Army compound. The call insurgents.

went out for reinforcements.

Recon Platoon of the 2d/47th which also had been a part of the II FFV reaction force, rolled onto Highway 1A and sped toward the scene of the battle. First Lieutenant Brice Barnes,

Seventeen miles away, Company B of the 4th Battalion, 39th Infantry was set up in a defensive position around the heart of the Binh Son Rubber Plantation. At 3:45 a.m. they received the word. Helicopters dropped into the open field near their position, and the men quickly boarded the slicks and flew into the fight.

A hot LZ

The men of Company B, 4th/39th, were directed to use the open area across the highway from II FFV Headquarters as their landing zone. While the soldiers manning the bunkers along the perimeter watched, the helicopters circled the field and began moving into a hot LZ. Small arms and automatic rifle fire erupted from the edge of the village as the Falcons poured from the choppers and into covered positions, where they began returning fire.



On the horn

Ashton

Airstrikes rake

Cong began preparing Bangalore

Captain James O. Lawson, Wala, Mich., Company B commander, stated that: "As soon as we suppressed the enemy fire, I reported to Lieutenant colonel John B. Tower, commander of the 2d/47th, for instructions. He gave us the mission of entering the village from the south and then clearing it."

With the infantry in position, the fight was joined. Elements of the 47th were now located near the center of the village toward the eastern side, with the men of the 39th in position along the southern edge. Firing all their organic weapons, they began to move in toward the entrenched enemy. Elements of the Viet Cong force found themselves trapped along a narrow street within the village as the APCs roared into the area. The .50 cal machine guns mounted atop the personnel carriers laid down a deadly stream of fire, with the advancing infantrymen firing their M-16s and M-79s.

At one point it was discovered that a sizable force of the enemy had taken cover in a drainage ditch alongside the roadway in the center of the village. From their covered position they were able to deliver effective fire against the foot soldiers.



Facing the enemy Fleming
grenadier exposed to fire

Gunships called

Helicopter gunships were called in to help flush the enemy from the network of ditches and culverts. With rockets and mini-guns blazing, the sleek UH-1C gun platforms came roaring in, making pass after

pass over the enemy position. The infantry on the ground continued to pound away at the Viet Cong, hurling grenades and raking the area with machinegun fire. Enemy bodies soon littered the street and ditches, and the men of the 9th Infantry Division were able to continue their movements.

Sweeping north

The fighting eased about noon, but sporadic fire continued to come from the houses. At 1:30 the final push began. U.S. helicopter gunships returned and began pounding the last enemy stronghold. The men of Company B, 4th/39th, fanned out across the southern edge of the village and began sweeping toward the north. The infantrymen of the 2d/47th worked alongside their APCs, cut quickly across the center of the village and began sweeping to the north.

As the gunships raked the area, the communist troops fired at the helicopters, exposing their positions to the men on the ground. The infantry quickly swarmed in to crush the remaining resistance within an hour. Final figures show that the enemy lost 50 men killed and ten detainees taken, in the battle of Widows' Village. 🇺🇸



Recon Platoon 2/47th sweeps Widows' Village

Kalsey

ACAVs crush communist resistance.