

Perhaps the platoon's best effort was in support of One Platoon, V Company, during its brush with Charlie in the Long Green. It was a true Anzac effort with one tube crewed by Kiwis and the other by Uc-Dai-Loi.

As a result of mortaring on Operation Goodwood, D Company recovered one of the battalion's best hauls of weapons, including a 12.7 mm heavy machine gun and important documents.

There were other contacts in which mortars played an important role, and some in which the platoon sat back in envy as "big brother" 104 Field Battery reached past mortar range for the enemy.

During the tour Capt B. J. Avery commanded the platoon.

Its sole fatality was Pte Bob Byrne, of Ermington, N.S.W., who died of wounds received in a mine incident, which also wounded four other mortarmen.

Each rifle company had a sergeant and a corporal as mortar fire controllers. They were Sgt Jordan and Cpl Upton (B Company), Sgt Stephens and Cpl Spence (C Company), Sgt McParland and Cpl Purnell (D Company), Sgt Southern and Cpl Cooper (V Company), and Sgt Buchanan and Lcpl Smeth (W1 Company). After six months W1 was replaced by W2 with Sgt Jenkins and Cpl Lakatani.

Corporals who commanded the fire sections in the field were Cpl Stafford, Cpl Carbone, Cpl Pearson, Cpl Wahanui and Cpl Blackledge.



ing team need not consist of the nine men, one dog and no machine gun laid down by the theory merchants.

When working with any one of the three black secret weapons (four-footed, wet nose type), Milo, Trajan, and occasionally, Marcus, a team consisting of a handler, coverman, team commander, radio operator, machine gun crew and a visual tracker proved ideal. By substituting a second visual tracker for the dog and handler, a versatile and independent tracking/reconnaissance team was formed.

The wet season provided the best tracking conditions and the age of the track and the numbers which left it were more accurately and easily determined. Provided little or no rain penetrated the canopy, the dogs were capable of tracing the scent.

In the dry they had little hope of following a scent over hot, dry, open paddy, particularly when a breeze quickly spread the scent. Creeks delayed follow-ups, but the trail could usually be found by casting—unless Charlie moved some distance in the creek. Fires, however, did stop progress, no matter how enthusiastic the dogs were.

Blood trails were relatively easy to follow, either with a visual tracker or dog, and they produced some worthwhile results.

A tracker team lead the sweep with D Company and found much of the large haul of equipment discarded by Charlie when the mortar platoon laid patterns on the creek-line near FSPB Janice.

Either as a tracker or heavy weapons team, the platoon was often with the rifle companies in contacts and had quite a few successes which were normally credited to the call-sign to which the team was attached.

The teams also had a number of brushes while operating independently. At FSPB Dyke on Operation Overlander, the platoon ambushed an estimated 12 VC the night after the battalion abandoned the base. Next morning the platoon found seven bodies, two drag marks and a blood trail.

Charlie lost quite a few sampans when the 90mm recoilless rifle was used in river ambushes. The 106mm recoilless rifles were aired on road-runner convoy escort—until the vehicles could stand the pace no longer.

The dogs, despite repeated exposure to the evils of Vung Tau and the 75th Medical Detachment (an American veterinary group), certainly proved their "point" and all had more than just Charlie to their credit. Not only their handlers, but the whole platoon regretted having to leave them in South Vietnam.

The platoon suffered only one casualty during the tour—which was quite an achievement considering the number of actions in which the teams were involved. It spoke highly of the platoon's teamwork.

Anti-tank/Tracker Platoon

POSSIBLY THE MOST versatile unit in the battalion, the anti-tank/tracker platoon filled several roles in every operation.

The platoon used three teams when attached to rifle companies and on individual platoon tasks. Each team was capable of tracking, reconnaissance, and anti-tank work with up to two heavy weapons in each team.

The trackers had an "international" tour, working with the Kiwi companies and several times with American units of 1/2 Infantry Battalion, 5/12 Infantry Battalion of 199 Tropic Light Infantry Brigade, 11 Armoured Cavalry Regiment and, somehow, 720 Military Police Battalion, which played a near-infantry defensive role in its area of responsibility near Long Binh.

A short time on operations proved that a workable track-



Intelligence Section

THE INTELLIGENCE SECTION was reorganised and specially trained in the months prior to embarkation for Vietnam.

Capt N.J. Underwood trained the men, initially, and then all members attended a combat intelligence course at the Intelligence Centre, Woodside, South Australia.

The intelligence section normally has six duty men, but this was increased by a theatre increment of five interpreters. Australians who spoke fluent Vietnamese were not available, so five soldiers, trained as normal intelligence duty men, filled these vacancies after attending a language course.

One was then attached to the three Australian rifle companies. The remainder were held at battalion headquarters and rotated to the rifle companies at frequent intervals to give everyone as much experience as possible in all fields.

Toward the end of the tour Cpl K.C. Johnson returned to 4RAR/NZ(Anzac)Bn from divisional intelligence and his linguistic abilities proved very useful.

For most of the tour seven Vietnamese were attached to the unit as interpreters.

The intelligence section was responsible for collecting as much information as possible about VC forces and their operational areas so that commanders and troops could be briefed thoroughly before operations.

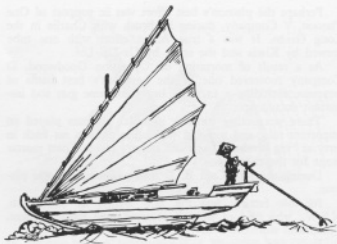
Often at short notice, the section was required to prepare detailed maps for the battalion and supporting arms for each operation. This generally meant about 180 maps for each operational area.

By some quirk of fate, operations were almost invariably scheduled for areas on the junction of four map sheets, and several times the operational boundaries were altered after the maps were finished.

However, the battalion always had maps when deployment began, although they sometimes lacked a few finer touches when they were prepared in the field.

Another normal, but interesting part of its duties, was the processing of all captured weapons, equipment and documents.

Capt Underwood left the section in October to become adjutant, and his place as intelligence officer was taken by Capt D.D. McKenzie.



Helping the Boys

Now is the time for Bob Hope to take his bandwagon on an annual pilgrimage to the world's front lines. "Dear Mom — well, Christmas and old Ski Nose are with us again over here..... and wow! those girls he brought along." Which is to represent the sometimes almost non-existent lines between entertainment and lust when the show goes on in a sort of sexual limbo.

The problem isn't without its students. One of them is the Rubensbuilt actress, Raquel Welch, who was quoted by the "Far East Economic Review" after a recent trip to Vietnam. "Sending girls like me to Vietnam to entertain the troops is like teasing a caged lion with a piece of raw meat," she said. "I'm not criticising our boys' thoughts or feelings one bit, I'm just telling you what I know was going through their minds..... As long as the U.S. Government is going to send kids like that off to an unpopular war, the least it could do is take care of their sexual needs. If the Government can organise college kids into a Peace Corps to serve the needs of the poor and uneducated, then it can also organise prostitutes into Peace Corps to serve the needs of the poor, sex-starved GIs in Vietnam."



"You've been home three weeks now. Don't you think you could sit at the table and use a knife and fork?"



Pte Jackson (left) helps visitor Capt Coulter (CMF) raise the Mortar Platoon ensign.

VC mines found on Operation Federal.



Pte Page, Anti-tank/Tracker Platoon.



Anti-tank/trackers at FSPB Virginia.

Pte Hunter removes ticks from Mile.



Pte Hyde cleans his mortar.

