

**FIRING CLOSE ARTILLERY SUPPORT
FOR THE ARVNS INSIDE CAMBODIA**

June, 1970, Fire support base Oklahoma

By JERRY GRANBERG

I served with A battery, 2/32, from Sept., 1969 until July, 1970. I served as motor officer, pay officer, Fire Direction officer, etc. I sent pictures to Chuck Healey for our website and to the museum at Fort Sill.

I did not take my camera when we went into Cambodia in May, 1970. However, I think that the pictures I have submitted tell the story of that period.

We had two people killed (Schell and Lassen; hope I spelled those names right) at Illingsworth on the night of 1 April, 1970. I flew to Illingsworth during the day of 1 April to pay our troops. At the time, the battery was split. I was with their two 8-inch guns which operated along the Cambodian border with a 155 battery.

We moved 60 miles at night from Tay Ninh City to west of Saigon along the Parrot's Beak to fire support at dawn for the start of the ARVN incursion. Ralph Jones and crew may have been the first Americans to invade Cambodia. Ask him about this incident.

During the month of June, 1970, A Battery fired over 4,500 rounds of 8-inch and 1,700 rounds of 175 mm from two guns of each caliber. We were 16 kilometers inside the Cambodian border in the Fishhook area at Fire Support Base Oklahoma. Our primary mission was the support of the ARVN Airborne Division. What a lot of work!!!

We were isolated for three days without re-supply of food, water and ammo because of bad weather and North Vietnamese. We had to convoy supplies from FSB Katum as there were not enough helicopters. Our logistics must have really been stretched.

During the month of June, 1970 at FSB Oklahoma, I was on duty one morning when a Special Forces Capt. came into the FDC with a fire mission. He had an ARVN recon patrol with a Special Forces advisor pinned down by the North Vietnamese almost due east of us at about 16,000 meters range. This was approaching the maximum range of the 8-inch howitzer.

I wanted to know the grid coordinates of the patrol so that we would not shoot too close. The 8-inch shell's bursting radius was 100 meters and we needed to be careful when we were shooting for troops that were not familiar with heavy artillery. The team leader wouldn't give us the coordinates over the radio as he was afraid the enemy might be listening.

I told the Special Forces Captain that the NVA probably already knew where the patrol was and that it was important we have that info so we didn't kill our own men. I did get the coordinates, which we plotted on our firing chart. What the patrol leader would do is give us targets based on his location with a distance and azimuth. We were the only thing between the patrol and annihilation.

After we started shooting, the patrol developed a sense of our firepower. At one point, I adjusted fire within 25 meters of the patrol. They dug in and found logs for cover. We fired quite a few rounds before the NVA broke off the fight.

I think it was on the first day of this engagement that the 1st Cav tried to extract the patrol with a medivac. The NVA shot down the chopper and the crew joined the patrol. I think that it was two of three days before the patrol was finally rescued and I don't remember how that happened.

When they were air-evacuated, the chopper brought the S.F. Sgt. to our firebase as this was also their base of operation. He came into the FDC to thank us. I was asleep at the time and this was reported to me by the other Lt. in FDC (Tom Freeling?)

I don't remember how many rounds our canoneers fired but I am guessing that it was at least several hundred. When we were not firing other missions, we left an 8-inch laid on that azimuth. I believe that the Warrant officer from the medivac that was shot down was given the Medal of Honor for his actions. I met a friend of his who told me about the medal.

Capt. Hayden and I were presented with medals by the ARVN Airborne Commander, Gen. Dong, for the efforts of A Battery. I still have the medal and picture of the presentation. I was given a certificate which I gave to the S-1 for recording on my personnel record. I never saw the certificate again. I do not have a copy of any General Orders authorizing my medal. I am assuming that the award was regarding the marooned ARVN patrol.

I came home in August, 1970, feeling very lucky to have survived. I deal with the guilt of surviving better as I get older. I hope that by striking the enemy with our artillery, we have a lot of Americans alive today because of what we did. I can't imagine how the North Vietnamese survived the pounding we gave them.