

'Heavenly' Bird Trips Red Attack

CHU LAI, Vietnam, (Special) — May the Bird of Paradise fly down and trip your illumination flare. May the light from the flare expose a company of camouflaged enemy soldiers surrounding your position.

It happened recently when a company of the 196th Inf. Brigade set up a night position in the flatlands 16 miles northwest of Tam Ky.

Soon after dark a trip flare went off and everybody took to their foxholes. Then a bird was soon flying away from where the trip wire was triggered.

Just as the men began laughing and relaxing again, the fighting broke loose. The enemy attacked from five areas of the perimeter. Some of them were within 30 yards from the Americal Div. unit.

Illumination rounds were called for and revealed several camouflaged enemy troops moving toward the 3rd Bn., 21st Inf., camp.

One platoon leader, 2nd Lt. Randall Hain, saw what he estimated to be a "whole enemy platoon moving towards our sector."

The four-and-one-half hour fight was believed started by one enemy platoon. "We figure possibly another two platoons were attempting to close in on our perimeter," said Capt. William Donsbach of Madison, N.J., the company commander.

Bird Gives The Word

Flare Tips Off 3/21

LZ BALDY—May the Bird of Paradise fly down and trip your illumination flare, and may the light from the flare expose a company of camouflaged enemy soldiers surrounding your night laager position.

This bizarre set of circumstances occurred recently when a 196th Inf. Bde. company was encamped in the flatland, 16 miles northwest of Tam Ky.

After dark, a trip flare was set off on the northern side of their perimeter, and everybody in the unit from the 3rd Bn., 21st Inf., took positions in their foxholes.

Flare Triggers Attack

A bird was seen flying away right where the trip wire was triggered.

Just as the men began laughing and relaxing again, all hell broke loose. The enemy launched an attack from five areas of the perimeter, some of them within 30 meters from the "Charger" unit.

Illumination rounds were called for by the forward observer, 1LT Charles G. Miller III (Virginia Beach, Va.). The light revealed movement of 10 camouflaged enemy toward 2LT James V. Gordon's (Columbia, S.C.) section of the perimeter.

Gunships Join Battle

Another platoon leader,

2LT Randall Hain (San Jose, Calif.) saw what he estimated to be a "whole platoon moving towards our sector."

Dustoff choppers, accompanied by gunships, were called in to evacuate the wounded and rout the enemy, during the four and a half hour battle.

The attack was initiated by one enemy platoon, but it was possible that another two platoons were attempting to close in on the "Gimlet" perimeter, said CPT William Donsbach (Madison, N.J.), the company commander.

Early Bird Warning

"The attack probably started prematurely when the bird set off the trip flare," the captain said.

A search of the perimeter the next morning uncovered numerous blood trails, but the VC effectively recovered all their dead and wounded.

It may not have been a fly-by-night affair, but one small bird definitely flew away with the top individual effort that night.