

made it. 'Charlie' could have stacked us up as high as he had ammo for. Perhaps that was his plan, perhaps we reacted to quickly for it to be implemented? God blessed us on that one & throughout that night. At that point, the "1st responders" were working feverishly to extract themselves from their battle damaged quarters and get into the fight and our EM were doing all they could to get on line but the ammo foot-lockers were still padlocked, frustrating our efforts. A fire axe was located and in short order the foot lockers were splintered and young men grabbed magazines & dispersed throughout our perimeter. No panic, just a rushed determination to defend ourselves, our family and our planes! While the drama in the OR & Arms Room was occurring, Graef attempted to bring the M60 into service, it fired one round & jammed. Spec.4 Mike Buttolph from W. Virginia was alerted to that fact & ran to the arms room & grabbed a 2nd M60, returned to the tower & quickly brought it into battery. By this point sirens were wailing throughout all of DBT. Troops from across the road were popping mortar flares to assist us & it cast a very eerie, surreal green light across our perimeter. At one point Spec. 5 Terry Hackney & myself spotted a VC running beyond the wire and we took him under fire until we saw him drop. Hand illumination flares and mortar launched fares continued to pop while some flares would hit the ground before flaming out, creating small grass & brush fires in scattered areas. The air filled w/the smell of burnt cordite, sirens wailing & voices calling out to others. Huey gunships were criss-crossing w/the beams of their flood lamps dancing rapidly across the ground with determination. That and the unmistakable Wop~Wop~Wop of their rotors brought a sense of comfort to all our troops as we witnessed them working back & forth. Slowly things began to quiet down & the 1st officer I saw was Captain Allen Hodgson, nor had I encountered any NCOs at all. He came to me & said "Mitch I need to get a search party together to clear our buildings & revetments & I need volunteers". It was a job that had to be done & I wasn't about to lay there in that ditch while my Brothers were clearing buildings so I volunteered. As did Spec.5 Jim Benoit, as did Spec.5 Terry Hackney & 3 more that I cannot recall. The job was ominous to say the least. We had no area lighting because our generator had been knocked out of action & we depended solely on lite from the flares. It helped greatly as long as we searched outside of the buildings but once we moved into the buildings, it got hairy to say the least. We were groping in the dark, feeling for anything threatening. W/our quarters & out-lying buildings secured, we moved to our flight line & revetments & insured our 'Birddogs' were safe (target of attack) as well. It was there we detected a sound emanating from deep inside one revetment. To our relief it was one of our cooks, Spec.4 Dale Jurney. Dale had taken position in the revetment to protect a parked 'Birddog' and he was armed quite well for the job~! In his hands he clutched a WW2 issue M3 'Grease Gun' chambered in .45ACP caliber, a stick magazine locked & loaded and at his feet was a clear plastic bag containing what appeared to be 500 rounds of lose .45 ammo~! Dale wasn't about to let 'Top' disarm him~~those cooks could get their hands on absolutely anything~!!!~ From there, we spread abreast into the perimeter area & swept it as well. On that sweep I recovered an enemy 'bangalore torpedo w/blasting cap' which had 75 cakes (about the size of a bar of soap) of C4 lashed in with vines. Actually the 'torpedo' found me when I tripped over it in the dark.....Once all was declared secure, it was noted we were missing 4 NCOs & it was believed they were dead or injured in the rubble of their quarters. Before day-lite our Battalion CO & SgtMajor arrived from Qui Nhon, then morning dawned & our men began digging thru the NCO quarters for our MIAs. They were discovered in the rubble unconcious but alive. Someone asked if they were dead & the reply was "yeah, they're dead,~~~ dead drunk"~! In short order, our 'livid' Battalion CO ordered those NCOs tossed onto an aircraft & they never returned. While our "MIAs" were being recovered, other 183rd troops were conducting a daytime sweep of the area. More & more blood trails from the wounded enemy were being found, along with explosives, ammo and a loaded AK47 magazine dropped by our invaders as they sought to escape our area. Later that morning a platoon of CIDG troops from across Hwy 1 dismounted a troop truck and formed into skirmish formation as they searched for dead or wounded enemy from the attack. As I and others watched from the front of the Orderly Room, there was an obvious excitement among those troops as they located a wounded VC hiding in thick brush. They fired their weapons into the brush, a troop rushed forward with cord, tied it to an ankle of the cornered VC then rushed away from the man and jerked his body clear of the brush with that attached cord. There was no detonation of a booby trap and no more enemy were located that day. The corpse of the sapper was dragged to the shoulder of Hwy 1 and left to rot and send a message to any VC or sympathizers that may pass and view the body. Our pilot, Captain Chuck Miller and several of us went to view the corpse. The body was nude except for a black loin cloth and heavy charcoal cammo and a Chekoslovakian olive drab field dressing on one knee where he had been shot by Spec.4 Butch Graef and 3 very distint 'fresh' bullet holes in his left side, almost perfectly spaced. Captain Miller recognized this dead enemy as the same South Vietnamese officer he had been training in aerial operations for the past several weeks. Frequently, Captain Miller would be accompanied by this same enemy KIA when they would enter our 183rd Orderly Room after completing their mission for that given day. The following day U.S. troops swept beyond the area the CIDGs had swept and it was shared with me by our former motor pool NCO, Ssgt. John Bradley, that 9 more bodies had been recovered by that subsequent search. As for us, we had 3 or 4 wounded, 3