

THE GENERALS
BROTHERHOOD
OF
WAR
BOOK
VI

BY W.E.B. GRIFFIN



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BOOK V: THE BERETS

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BOOK III: THE HUNTERS

THE GENERALS

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For Uncle Charley and The Bull. RIP October 1979.

And for Donn. Who would have ever believed four stars?

And for Sp4 J.S.B. II

Btry "A" 2/59 ADA

1st Armored Division

Who Just Joined The Brotherhood

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PART ONE

PRIORITY

0215 ZULU 15 OCT 62

FROM HQ MAC VIETNAM

TO JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF WASH DC

INFO: C-IN-C PACIFIC HONOLULU HAWAII
US EMBASSY SAIGON

SUBJECT: DAILY REPORT OF INCIDENTS INVOLVING LOSS OF US MIL PERSONNEL FOR PERIOD 0001 ZULU-2400 ZULU
14 OCT 62

1. TWO (2) US ARMY ENLISTED PERSONNEL HOSPITALIZED SAIGON 1350 ZULU RESULT VEHICULAR ACCIDENT BETWEEN US ARMY THREE-QUARTER-TON TRUCK AND INDIGENOUS PASSENGER AUTOMOBILE.

2. TWO (2) USAF ENLISTED PERSONNEL HOSPITALIZED SAIGON 1410 ZULU SUFFERING EXTREME GASTROINTESTINAL DISTRESS BELIEVED CAUSED BY IMBIBING INDIGENOUS IMPURE ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES.

3. ONE (1) US ARMY CAPTAIN, ONE (1) US ARMY LIEUTENANT, THREE (3) US ARMY ENLISTED PERSONNEL KILLED; ONE (1) US ARMY ENLISTED MAN MISSING IN ACTION; TWO (2) US ARMY ENLISTED PERSONNEL HOSPITALIZED RESULT WOUNDS SUFFERED DURING PERIOD 1430 TO 1615 ZULU DURING UNSUCCESSFUL VIETCONG ATTEMPT OVERRUN SPECIAL FORCES CAMP VICINITY NUI BA DEN.

4. ONE (1) USAF MAJOR HOSPITALIZED 1625 ZULU RESULT INJURIES SUFFERED IN CRASH LANDING T-28 AIRCRAFT DA NANG.

5. ONE (1) US ARMY MAJOR, ONE (1) USN LIEUTENANT (MC), ONE (1) USMC CAPTAIN, TWO (2) US ARMY LIEUTENANTS HOSPITALIZED 2030 ZULU SAIGON MINOR RESULT BURNS SUFFERED WHEN LIQUID PETROLEUM GAS COOKING STOVE BACHELOR OFFICERS QUARTERS #3 EXPLODED.

6. ONE (1) US ARMY ENLISTED MAN HOSPITALIZED 2205 ZULU DA NANG RESULT BLOW TO HEAD FROM BLUNT INSTRUMENT SUFFERED WHILE GUARDING US ARMY CLASS V DUMP DURING SUCCESSFUL ROBBERY.

7. SUMMARY:

KIA	MIA	TO BE EVACUATED	TO BE HOSPITALIZED IN COUNTRY
20	00	30	40
0	0	0 WO	0 WO
WO	WO		
3	1	1 EM	6 EM
EM	EM		

BY COMMAND OF GENERAL HARKINS:
 JAMES C. WILINNS
 BRIG GEN, USMC

(One)
Nui Ba Den
Republic of South Vietnam
15 October 1962

The incident referred to in paragraph 3 of the Daily Report of Incidents Involving Loss of U.S. Military Personnel for the period 0001 to 2400 14 October 1962 took place at what was officially known as Camp 7.

Camp 7 was, however, known to its American garrison as Dien Bien Phu II, and there was a neatly painted sign to that effect. Even more informally, it was known as “Foo Two.”

The American garrison consisted of nine soldiers: a captain, a lieutenant, two master sergeants, three sergeants first class, and two staff sergeants. There were also 160 Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) officers and men under the command of an ARVN captain. The ARVN troops were in many cases accompanied by their dependents, of whom there were 236, ranging in age from babes in arms (some of whom had been delivered by Sergeant First Class Dugan) to grandfathers and grandmothers. Most of these, though they looked to be about ninety, were in fact in their late forties or early fifties.

The American garrison was officially “A” Team #16 of the First Special Forces Group. Two members of the Team were Afro-American: Lieutenant A. L. Wills, the Exec, and SFC Dugan, the Medic. The Old Man—who was twenty-six—Captain William French and everyone else save Master Sergeant Petrofski, the Operations Sergeant, were White, Anglo-Saxon Protestants. Petrofski had been brought to the United States as a teenager from Russia.

Once a month, in compliance with Army Regulations, Lieutenant Wills (who in addition to his other duties was Minority Affairs Officer) interviewed SFC Dugan to inquire if he had in any way been subjected to unfair treatment because of his race and/or color. Wills’s report was afterward endorsed by the commanding officer and sent up through channels.

When the big attack came, Lieutenant Wills was in the command post, bent over a Royal portable typewriter, very carefully composing a letter to higher headquarters advancing the argument that practitioners of the Russian Orthodox faith were obviously a minority group within the U.S. Army, and that therefore, under the applicable Army Regulations, the Army was obliged to make provision for Master Sergeant Petrofski to have access to the spiritual guidance of ordained Russian Orthodox clergy. The enlisted man in question, Lieutenant Wills wrote (at the suggestion of Staff Sergeant

Geoffrey Craig), was showing visible signs of lowered morale as a result of being without spiritual guidance. Under the tenets of his faith, Master Sergeant Petrofski was unable to seek such guidance from available Protestant or Roman Catholic chaplains.

Lieutenant Wills believed that Staff Sergeant Craig was an uncommonly clever fellow. Even though Craig was the youngest man on the team, he had been the unanimous choice of everyone to replace SFC Caseby as Assistant Operations Sergeant on Caseby's completion of tour. And Wills's concern for Master Sergeant Petrofski's spiritual welfare—a stroke of pure goddamned genius—had been Craig's idea.

There was no question in Wills's mind that when the letter was sent through channels, action would be taken. As Craig had pointed out, they would have two choices. They could either find some Russian Orthodox priest willing to come out to the boonies where there was a good chance of getting his ass blown off, or they could send Master Sergeant Petrofski on some reasonable schedule to the Russian Orthodox church in Saigon.

Even if he actually had to make an appearance at the Russian Orthodox church, that would give him anywhere from twenty to forty-eight hours in Saigon. In Saigon a Chinese copy of the Russian Moisin-Nagant rifle was worth a hundred dollars or a case of whiskey to the Chairborne Troopers. Kalashnikov assault rifle (in shorter supply and therefore in greater demand) was worth two hundred fifty, maybe three hundred in excellent condition. A Vietcong flag was worth at least a bottle of whiskey. Petrofski was a great big sonofabitch, and could carry maybe a half dozen of each wrapped Vietcong flags in a couple of duffle bags.

The weapons bunker held nearly thirty Moisin-Nagants and eighteen Kalashnikovs. There weren't many Vietcong flags, but the ARVN dependents could make up a couple dozen over night. The very least Petrofski could be expected to bring back from his spiritual pilgrimage to Saigon would be a couple of cases of good Scotch and bourbon whiskey and maybe even a couple of grand. With a little bit of luck—by, say, bribing an Army Aviator—he could do much better than that: A new stereo system would be nice (theirs was on the fritz), and maybe a small refrigerator. The one they had was small, old, and showing signs of decrepitude.

Some months after Staff Sergeant Craig had joined the team, Lieutenant Wills had found the moment to ask him if there was anything to the stories going around that he was related to Lieutenant Colonel Craig W. Lowell.

“We're first cousins once removed,” Craig had replied. “Or second cousins. I never got that straight. He and my father are cousins.”

Lieutenant Wills had found that fascinating. Lieutenant Colonel Craig W. Lowell had quite a reputation within the Green Berets. For instance, Lowell had been an asshole buddy of Brigadier General Paul T. Hanrahan, the ranking Green Beret, going back to some John Wayne escapade Lowell had been involved in with the general when Lowell was a young lieutenant in Greece. For another instance, when Lowell visited the general at the Special Warfare Center at Bragg, he usually arrived at the controls of his own personal quarter-million-dollar airplane. The word was—and the airplane seemed to prove it—that Lowell had more money than God.

“You rich, too?” Wills had asked.

“About as rich as he is,” Staff Sergeant Craig had replied, matter-of-factly, “but we rich people don’t say ‘rich.’ We say ‘comfortable.’”

“Then what the hell are you doing in the Army?”

“Why, Lieutenant, I thought you knew,” Staff Sergeant Craig said dryly, “my friends and neighbors selected me to keep the world safe for democracy.”

“And then you volunteered for Forces?”

“Not exactly,” Craig said.

“What does that mean?”

“It means that I was in the stockade at Fort Jackson facing a general court and five to fifteen at Leavenworth when Cousin Colonel offered an alternative.”

“What the hell did you do?”

“I punched out my basic training platoon sergeant,” Craig said. “The charge was ‘assault upon a noncommissioned officer in the execution of his office.’ I broke the sonofabitch’s jaw.”

“That was dumb,” Lieutenant Wills had said, without thinking.

“That thought has run through my mind once or twice,” Staff Sergeant Craig admitted. “On one hand, five to fifteen in Leavenworth is a long time. On the other, the last I heard, they weren’t shooting at people in Kansas.”

Afterward, Lieutenant Wills had wondered if asking Craig about himself had been smart. What he had back in the States had nothing to do with what was going on at Foo Two, but he was made a little uncomfortable knowing that a member of the team was so close to the brass. It might have been better not to know that.

The dull growl of the hand-cranked siren actually started a moment or two before the first mortar round came in.

“Oh, shit!” Lieutenant Wills said. In another couple of minutes, the letter would have been finished.

“What the hell!” Staff Sergeant Craig said, as he picked up his M-14 and started out of the command post.

Daytime attacks on Dien Bien Phu II were rare. They were too costly for the Vietcong. It was much easier in the daytime to locate Charley’s mortar positions than it was at night. And Foo Two’s ARVN mortar men were pretty good with mortars themselves. Charley could therefore expect incoming immediately after he had fired his third round. So it was much safer for Charley to sit out i

the boonies in the dark, lob a couple of rounds in, and then get the hell out of there before getting himself blown away.

And Charley had also learned that if—because of mines, concertina wire with tin cans attached, and Claymores placed here and there—it was difficult to approach Foo Two at night, it was even more expensive to try during daylight, when there were 150 people shooting with everything from old M-1 .30 carbines to M-60 7.62-mm machine guns on tripods.

These considerations had been respectfully, and in some detail, pointed out to both the commanding officer of the 39th Infantry Regiment of the People's Liberation Army and to his political advisor by the commanding officer of Number 9 Company, who would lead the final assault on Foo Two.

The political advisor had explained to him that the war of liberation against the puppet regime in Saigon could not succeed until the people recognized the inevitability of victory. Though Captain Van Hung Au did not quite understand what that meant, he certainly didn't think he was in any position to question the judgment of a lieutenant colonel who had come all the way from Hanoi to offer his experience and guidance to the 39th Regiment.

And then there were several practical reasons why the base on Nui Ba Den had to be eliminated, the political advisor continued. Some of these were military in nature: The puppet soldiers, under American leadership, had reduced below a level that could be accepted the flow of arms and other supplies down the valley.

They were, furthermore, interfering with liberation efforts in their immediate area. It had become difficult, for instance, for the People's Democratic Government to collect the taxes necessary to support the war of liberation. In more than a dozen incidents, tax collectors had been betrayed. Thus, when they had entered villages to collect pigs, chickens, rice, and vegetables, and to find "volunteer" porters to carry supplies down the valley, they had been met by Green Beret and puppet troops.

This tended to breed disrespect for the People's Democratic Government. The situation, furthermore, was going to get worse, unless stopped. Because of the success of the base on Nui Ba Den, Intelligence had learned that the American Green Berets intended to establish bases at other points where they could disrupt the flow of supplies south, and breed greater disrespect for the People's Democratic Government.

It was consequently decided at the highest echelons that the base on Nui Ba Den had to be eliminated.

The commanding officer of the 39th Regiment had then explained the tactical situation.

First of all, as Chairman Mao had so often pointed out, it was the greatest wisdom to attack the enemy when and where he did not believe an attack would occur. Second, the Americans and their puppet soldiers on the mountaintop believed themselves impregnable to an assault by anything less than a regiment. There was no reason for them to believe that a regiment was anywhere near.

Consequently it was intended to attack the base on Nui Ba Den in regimental strength in daylight.

Since Intelligence had reported that approximately 150 people were stationed in the area, it was

Since intelligence had reported that approximately once every ninety minutes radio contact was made between the Green Berets and their headquarters, the plan called for the attack to begin immediately after the American radio operator signed off. Initial mortar fire would then be directed at the American communications bunker, and would continue until the bunker and/or its antennae were destroyed. Once this was done, there would be a period of at least ninety minutes during which the Americans' superiors would think that all was well at Nui Ba Den.

The next phase of the attack, lasting fifteen minutes, would be a heavy mortar and rocket attack on the base. Since the puppet soldiers were accustomed to return fire without much regard to their ammunition supply, they would fire what ammunition they had almost with abandon, confident that the attack would be like the others they had experienced. The defenders of Nui Ba Den would therefore expend their ammunition in futile counterfire against a force which, with the exception of the troops exposing themselves momentarily to fire their mortars and rocket launchers, would be safely below ground.

Phase Three of the attack would be the first assault wave. Nine companies of infantry were available for the assault, including Captain Van Hung Au's Number 9 company. These would attack three companies at a time. While it was to be hoped that the first wave would succeed in breaching the first and second perimeter lines, that seemed unlikely to happen.

What could be expected was that Nui Ba Den's defenders, still unaware of the size of the force attacking them, would expend what was left of their ammunition.

Five minutes after Assault Wave One began its assault, there would be another five-minute mortar and rocket barrage on the enemy positions. Immediately thereafter Assault Wave Two would begin its assault.

Finally, there would be one more rocket and mortar barrage, followed by Assault Wave Three. Assault Wave Three would be commanded by Captain Van Hung Au. It was politically necessary that he survive the battle, so that the local people, who knew him, would identify him with the victory.

There would be no prisoners—unless any of the Americans were found alive. If that was the case these were to be given first priority for medical attention. After all the Americans had been photographed, their wounded were to be taken away. (Publication of such photographs in the United States and elsewhere tended to diminish enthusiasm for the war.) Second priority was the removal of small arms and ammunition. Third priority was the removal of People's Liberation Army dead. It was politically necessary not to leave large numbers of dead People's Liberation Army soldiers on the site. Fourth priority was the removal of wounded.

The weapons, ammunition, and other liberated supplies would be cached in tunnels to be built for that purpose, together with the heavier weapons (mortars, rocket launchers, and ammunition) brought in for the assault. They would be moved after the anticipated sweep of the area had been accomplished by puppet troops.

The dead would be buried in tunnels, and the tunnel mouths sealed.

Insofar as possible, the wounded would be moved. But it would be regrettably necessary to eliminate the wounded who could not be moved or who seemed likely to expire. They would be buried

in tunnels.

The assault force would then disperse.

Priority in the evacuation from the battle site was to be given to the photographers and, if there were any, American prisoners.

Captain Van Hung Au would be informed when his role in the assault was over, whereupon he would disperse his men and await further orders.

(Two)

Foo Two SOP (Standing Operating Procedure) in the event of an attack prescribed the duty stations of the officers and men of the "A" Team. The commanding officer, the operations sergeant, and the commo sergeant were to go to the CP (Command Post). The exec and the deputy operations sergeant were to go to Bunker Hill. The medic was to go to the Dispensary, a sandbag bunker identified with a Red Cross and a neatly lettered sign reading "Obstetrics and Gynecology." The other members of the "A" team were charged with seeing that the ARVN troops did what they were supposed to be doing.

Dien Bien Phu II made reference to the heavily fortified French positions at Dien Bien Phu, which had been overrun by Ho Chi Minh's forces some years before the Americans had become involved in Vietnam. The implication was that Dien Bien Phu II, like Dien Bien Phu, was surrounded by enemies and about to get blown away. This wasn't a precise analogy, for Dien Bien Phu had been in a valley, and Foo Two was on the top of a mountain. Still, Foo Two was in the middle of nowhere, surrounded by hostile Vietnamese. And it was clear to every member of the "A" Team that, presuming Charley was willing to pay the price, Foo Two was just as vulnerable as the original.

"Bunker Hill" did not, except as a play on words, refer to the hill in Boston. Foo Two's Bunker Hill was a bunker built on the top of the hill.

The hilltop consisted of three granite pinnacles, each about ten feet tall, each separated from the others by a few feet. Bunker Hill used these three pinnacles as its foundation. The paths between them had been roofed over with timber, and the roof protected by layers of sandbags. Surrounding this structure was a four-foot-high wall of sandbags. Within the wall of sandbags were four M-60 machine gun positions, each roofed over with timbers and sandbags. Their fields of fire covered the entire

compound and most of the approaches to the compound. There were also several sandbag-protected rifleman's firing positions. The heavy armament of Bunker Hill was mortars, of which there were four. Three were 60-mm M-19s, which could throw shells just over a mile. The one 81-mm M-29, Bunker Hill's heavy artillery, could throw its shells almost two miles. Two of the 60s were emplaced so as to cover the approaches to Foo Two where the terrain interrupted the machine guns' beaten zone of fire. The other 60 and the 81 were emplaced to bring the most logical approach to Foo Two under fire.

The passageways between the stone pinnacles were stacked with ammunition, as was the "room" formed in their center. Bunker Hill was both Foo Two's first and last line of defense. It was from Bunker Hill that the first rounds in defense would be fired; and if Foo Two was overrun, it would be

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