

Stemming the Tide"

By John M Carland

Chapter 11: Spoiling Operations on the High Plateau (Early 1966)

While General Larsen concentrated his forces in the coastal lowlands during the spring, he could not ignore the less populated but strategically significant Central Highlands. After the bloody fighting in the Ia Drang the previous November, he believed that it was just a matter of time before Communist forces sortied across the border in strength and once again challenged allied positions in the western provinces. Already, intelligence findings were painting an ominous picture there, as General Man's B3 Front had grouped its forward command element and the three North Vietnamese regiments it controlled—the 32d, 33d, and 66th—into a potentially formidable unit, the 1st PAVN Division. Additional elements followed, among them the 24th and 88th PAVN Regiments, as the leadership in Hanoi easily matched the U.S. troop commitment.¹



General "Swede" Larson

The best that General Larsen could counter with in the three highlands border provinces—Kontum, Pleiku, and Darlac—was the newly deployed 3d Brigade, 25th Infantry Division, at Pleiku City, still an untested force. He informed the brigade commander, Col. Everette A. Stoutner, that the 1st Cavalry Division would support him in an emergency but, because of its duties on the coast, would only be available for limited periods of time. To hold the line in the highlands, Colonel Stoutner would have to meet enemy threats as they arose. The spoiling attack would be his weapon of choice in the early months of 1966.²

The Highlands Brigade Enters Combat

Protected by the 1st Cavalry Division, the 3d Brigade settled into its encampment quickly and was ready by mid-January to undertake its first combat operation—a joint U.S.—South Vietnamese effort to secure Highway 19 from Qui Nhon to Pleiku. The work was routine, but it gave Colonel Stoutner's men a chance to gain practical experience in patrolling, establishing ambushes, escorting convoys, and setting up perimeter defenses.

On 22 January, shortly after the operation ended, General Westmoreland traveled to the brigade's base camp to welcome the unit. Although encouraging, he sounded a solemn note. The war would be long and hard, he told the troops. They would have to "work like hell and fight like tigers."³

Two weeks later General Larsen gave the 3d Brigade its second mission, Operation TAYLOR—a search and destroy expedition along the Krong Bolah River, about forty kilometers from the Cambodian border, where a North Vietnamese battalion reportedly was lurking. On 5 February, leaving Lt. Col. Edward F. Callanan's 1st Battalion, 35th Infantry, behind in reserve, Stoutner moved his other two battalions, Lt. Col. Gilbert Proctor's 1st of the 14th Infantry and Lt. Col. George A. Scott's 2d of the 35th Infantry, along with direct-support artillery, twenty kilometers northwest of Pleiku to the hamlet of Plei Mrong. The following day he sent Scott's battalion north along the east bank of the Krong Bolah, where it received harassing fire from the opposite side of the river. Proctor's battalion responded by helicoptering to the west bank in search of the offending units. After two more days of patrolling, Stoutner pulled the battalions back to Plei Mrong on the eighth, and shortly thereafter his entire brigade returned to Pleiku City. Except for a few minor skirmishes and several mortar attacks that killed 3 Americans and wounded 12, TAYLOR achieved little other than providing the new brigade with firsthand experience in conducting ground and airmobile operations in the rugged interior.⁴

The next assignment, Operation GARFIELD, took the 3d Brigade to Darlac Province, south of Pleiku. Standing some two hundred meters above sea level, much of the area consisted of rolling terrain, but rugged mountains up to twenty-five hundred meters in height and heavy jungle characterized its southern and southeastern portions. Since the dry season was under way, low humidity, warm temperatures, and prevailing winds from the east and northeast provided good campaigning weather.

The brigade was to search for North Vietnamese forces north and west of the province capital, Ban Me Thuot, in a large area bounded on the east by Highway 14, on the west by the Cambodian border, on the south by Ban Me Thuot, and on the north by the Darlac/Pleiku boundary. Although the brigade's intelligence officer suggested that a North Vietnamese battalion might be located about thirty kilometers north of Ban Me Thuot, intelligence on enemy activities in the region was sketchy at best. Whether or not the operation achieved its primary goal of flushing the enemy out of a long-standing safe haven, the hope was that it would generate the sort of intelligence that would lead to productive missions in the future.

Operation GARFIELD commenced on 25 February, when C-130s began a two-day round-the-clock airlift of the brigade from Pleiku to Ban Me Thuot East airfield, where Stoutner established his command post. The South Vietnamese 3d Battalion, 44th Regiment, 23d Infantry Division, provided security for the brigade headquarters, freeing Stoutner's maneuver elements for the hunt. From 28 February to 7 March his troops conducted numerous air assaults and saturation patrols, increasingly directing their attention to the area around the Mewal Plantation, a suspected infiltration way station about twenty kilometers north of Ban Me Thuot. Although sporadic firefights occurred, the largest force that Stoutner's men encountered was a squad.⁵

On 4 March General Larsen ordered Colonel Stoutner to shift his base of operations to Ban Brieng airfield, the site of a closed Special Forces camp fifty-five kilometers north of

Ban Me Thuot and just west of Highway 14. After completing the move, Stoutner initiated a series of patrols between the eighth and fifteenth, mainly looking west of Ban Brieng along the boundary between Darlac and Pleiku Provinces. He was able to cover a great deal of ground this time because Larsen had made a number of Chinooks available to him to move his troops and artillery. Even so, one day was much like any another—air assaults into sterile landing zones, foot patrols into surrounding terrain, and no combat. The monotony was deceiving, however, because the enemy could appear unexpectedly. At 0320 on the eleventh one of Colonel Proctor's companies in a night laager received a pounding from between forty and sixty mortar rounds that wounded 11 men.⁶

On 15 March Stoutner's brigade had its first taste of major combat. The previous evening Colonel Callanan's 1st of the 35th Infantry had settled in at a landing zone about thirteen kilometers northwest of Ban Brieng. During the night an enemy force fired forty to fifty mortar rounds at the perimeter, but the rounds fell short. The following morning Callanan ordered Company A to search in the direction from which the barrage had come. The 3d Platoon left on that mission at 0630, following the Ea Wy, a stream. Coming upon the mortaring site, the troops found a number of unfired rounds, a booklet with firing tables, and a history of the enemy unit's operations over the previous year. They spent the next three hours moving northwest along the stream. Around noon the platoon leader decided to return to base, but shortly afterward his point man discovered a wire and started to follow it to its source. When he did, North Vietnamese troops who had been watching all along brought the platoon under fire.⁷



Men of the 3d brigade, 25th Infantry Division, load artillery on a Chinook during GARFIELD.

Although outnumbered, the Americans held their own against possibly two reinforced companies from a unit later identified as the 32d Regiment. Within fifteen minutes a forward air controller brought in the first of what would become sixteen tactical air sorties over the afternoon. At 1315 the commander of Company A air-assaulted in with another platoon. The enemy chose that moment to launch an attack and inflicted

casualties on the arriving troops. In the end, however, the North Vietnamese got the worst of it, as shells from the nearby 2d Battalion, 9th Artillery, continued to rain down upon them in between helicopter flights. A half hour after the arrival of the company commander, a third platoon landed. The company counterattacked, overrunning the strongpoint and pursuing the North Vietnamese as they fled to the west and south. Meanwhile, artillery and close-air support pounded likely avenues of escape along the Ea Wy, and Callanan sent his Company B about a thousand meters west to serve as a blocking force. The Americans then conducted a three-hour search, which resulted in 21 North Vietnamese killed. During the evening the two companies linked up near where the action had started and folded in behind a common perimeter to spend the night. In all, Callanan's men had suffered 11 killed and 27 wounded. Enemy casualties came to 36 known killed and possibly another 100 killed. The Americans captured twelve rifles and an American M79 grenade launcher.⁸

A second clash occurred a few days later. On 18 March Colonel Proctor's 1st of the 14th Infantry deployed some thirty kilometers northwest of Ban Brieng. After searching all day long, the battalion simulated a departure by helicopter, but only the command group and the artillery actually withdrew. During the night the three rifle companies that stayed behind moved out along different pre-selected routes, hoping that the North Vietnamese would think they had the area to themselves and would let down their guard. When nothing occurred the first night, the troops took cover during daylight and returned to the field when darkness fell. Once again nothing happened, but at 0745 on the twentieth Company C fought a North Vietnamese force for about forty-five minutes, killing 19 at a cost of 1 wounded.⁹

Over the next five days Stoutner's battalions continued their efforts. In a series of small firefights they accounted for 15 more enemy killed, losing 1 of their own. Stoutner finally terminated GARFIELD on 25 March. During the month-long operation the 3d Brigade, supported by air strikes and artillery, had tallied 122 enemy dead at a cost of 21 Americans killed. Stoutner believed that he had also kept the north Vietnamese off balance, making it more difficult for them to prepare for operations during the coming rainy season (Map 17).¹⁰

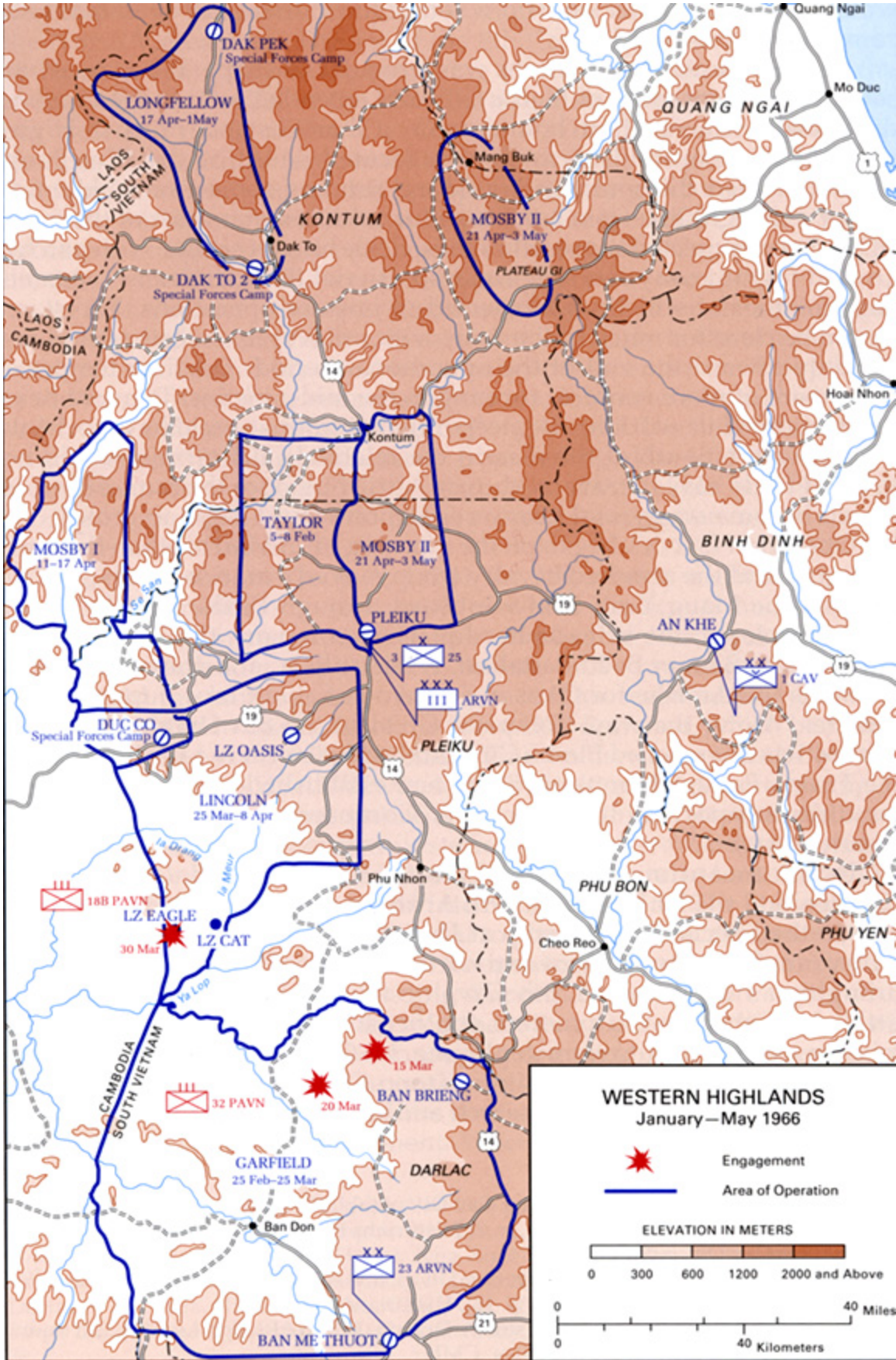
The Airmobile Division Returns

In early March reliable reports received by American intelligence suggested that Communist forces would attack U.S. and South Vietnamese installations in western Pleiku Province when the monsoon season began. According to the reports, enemy commanders had conducted sand table exercises for assaults on the Special Forces camps at Plei Me and Duc Co and on the district headquarters at Thanh An. Later in the month intelligence analysts added that a North Vietnamese soldier captured in Darlac Province had revealed plans for large-scale attacks on South Vietnamese government positions in both Pleiku and Kontum Provinces.¹¹

General Westmoreland took the information seriously. On 18 March, visiting I Field Force at Nha Trang, he told General Larsen that the Front was building up stockpiles

near targets slated for its monsoon offensive. He believed that the assaults would peak around 1 June. Prior to that time, he said, it was essential for U.S. forces to do everything they could to spoil the enemy's preparations. For if they failed to do so, the monsoon would inhibit American mobility and shield the North Vietnamese from the worst effects of American firepower. Taking Westmoreland at his word, Larsen laid out a series of four operations to thwart the enemy in the highlands. The 1st Cavalry Division shouldered the burden in three of these operations; the 3d Brigade, 25th Division conducted the fourth.¹²

General Kinnard gave primary responsibility for the first operation LINCOLN, to Colonel Hennessey's 1st Brigade. Lacking precise information on the whereabouts of the North Vietnamese, Hennessey decided to search suspected base areas around Duc Co, Plei Me, and Thanh An in hopes of developing a more accurate picture. His initial task force would consist of a forward headquarters, three infantry battalions, the division reconnaissance squadron, and his direct-support light artillery and a medium battery, as well as two units from Stoutner's 3d Brigade - Company B, 1st Battalion, 69th Armor, and Troop C, 3d Squadron, 4 Cavalry. The armor would protect the roads. Hennessey planned to employ one of the infantry battalions in each of the three target areas while establishing his forward command post at Landing Zone Oasis near Thanh An. Depending on how the situation developed, Kinnard would decide at a later date on whether to continue the operation and commit a larger force.¹³



LINCOLN'S area of operations was irregular in shape. It began about seven kilometers south of Pleiku City and extended west to the Cambodian border. The northern boundary lay a short distance north of Highway 19. The Lop and Meur Rivers, located south of the Chu Pong Massif, formed the southern boundary, running some twenty kilometers in a straight line from a point about ten kilometers east of the massif. Planners expected the weather to be fickle but not severe, with patchy ground fog on many mornings and occasional thunderstorms on some days, neither of which was expected to impede operations. The skies would be clear for much of the time, with unfavorable weather appearing only toward the end of the operational period. Daytime temperatures were of more concern, running in the mid-nineties. To avoid heat prostration while working the steep hills, the troops would have to drink a lot of water. South of the massif, the relatively flat terrain would be dry and fairly easy to traverse during April; but, once the rains began, it would become soggy, and heavy vegetation would begin to grow.¹⁴

Operation LINCOLN began on the morning of 25 March, when the tank company and the armored cavalry troop moved out to secure Highway 19 from the Mang Yang Pass westward through Pleiku City to Oasis. That completed, the brigade headquarters company, the 2d Battalion, 8th Cavalry, Battery B, 2d Battalion, 17th Artillery, and various support elements left An Khe for Oasis in a convoy of about four hundred fifty vehicles. Along the way, Company C, 2d of the 8th Cavalry, quit the convoy when it reached Pleiku City and headed north to a position called the TURKEY FARM, where the brigade had established a base for helicopter units supporting the operation. Company C would protect the aviation laager.

In the meantime, at 0715, Colonel Beard's 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry, and the 2d Battalion, 19th Artillery, moved in C-130s from An Khe to the Special Forces camp at Duc Co. Soon after arriving, the infantry fanned out to the west and northwest. Also that morning Colonel Broughton's 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry, flew to Landing Zone BEAR, a little more than ten kilometers southeast of Duc Co, and began its mission. As these units were deploying, Lt. Col. Robert M. Shoemaker's 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry—minus Troop C, which was helping guard the TURKEY FARM—conducted search and screening operations throughout the area.¹⁵

Spoiling Operations on the High Plateau

From 26 to 29 March Broughton's and Beard's battalions hunted for the North Vietnamese. The 1st of the 8th Cavalry ended up southwest of Duc Co near the border, sweeping almost to the Ia Drang on the twenty-eighth. The 1st of the 12th Cavalry also approached the border but west and north of Duc Co. Contact was limited to occasional exchanges of fire, with a few casualties on both sides. On the twenty-ninth Colonel Hennessey altered his lineup, substituting Colonel Hemphill's 2d of the 8th Cavalry for Colonel Beard's 1st of the 12th Cavalry, which became the brigade reserve at Oasis. He also replaced Company C, 2d of the 8th, at the TURKEY FARM with Company A, 1st of the 12th.

At first, Colonel Hennessey had intended to abandon the search near the border and to shift his forces eastward, but early in the afternoon of 30 March he changed his mind when helicopter scouts from Troop B, 1st of the 9th, spotted three enemy soldiers two kilometers from the border and five kilometers south of the Chu Pong Massif. The helicopters fired on the group, flushing some thirty from hiding. The soldiers scurried away. Hennessey ordered a rifle platoon to the site. He had hopes of seizing a prisoner or two who could provide information on the size of the force and its intentions.¹⁶

The platoon from Troop A, 1st of the 9th, twenty-eight strong, deployed in four Hueys to just south of where the scouts had seen the enemy troops. On the ground at 1530 three of its four squads, led by acting platoon leader Capt. John S. Sabine, moved northeast while the fourth held the landing zone. Intelligence later revealed that Sabine's men had landed in the midst of the 18B PAVN Regiment, which had only recently arrived via the Ho Chi Minh Trail on its way south to Phu Yen Province to join the 5th PAVN Division. The tired soldiers were resting at Tram Giao Lien 17, a communications-liaison station. Situated halfway between the larger military way stations, or binh trams, that provided movement control along the trail, many of these commo-liaison stations were on spurs that ran eastward into South Vietnam. The stations and the routes connecting them were vital to Hanoi's logistical pipeline, and most encroachments by American troops would be met with force.¹⁷

Within five minutes of landing Captain Sabine's men captured a North Vietnamese soldier, who told them that a thousand of his fellows were nearby. Hardly had he made the comment when enemy forces opened fire. Sabine fell in the initial volley, mortally wounded. As his three squads withdrew toward the landing zone, gunships from the 1st of the 9th covered their movement. When the Hueys ran out of ammunition, the crews started blasting away with their side-arms rather than abandon the troops on the ground waiting to be rescued.

The extraction started at 1545. The first Huey lifted off without incident, but a second one, which included the captive, came under heavy fire and went down, killing the prisoner and injuring several others. The group was eventually rescued by another helicopter. That left fifteen troopers at the landing zone. Around 1615 a fourth helicopter arrived, but when the weight of the men proved too heavy for it to fly, three volunteered to stay behind. Fate was with them, for when the Huey finally took off, enemy troops concentrated their fire upon it and brought it down. All but one of the Americans on board and a Vietnamese interpreter died in the crash. A short time later, yet another helicopter landed and boarded the remaining three without further incident.¹⁸

Meanwhile, Colonel Hennessey ordered in Company A, 1st of the 12th Cavalry, from the TURKEY FARM. The unit landed unopposed at EAGLE, around five hundred meters from the original battle action, but the interlude did not last. Moving northeast and approaching to within some twenty meters of a tree line, the troops came under automatic weapons fire. According to one of the platoon leaders, 2d Lt. Daniel J. Kapica, enemy fire discipline and camouflage were remarkable. "We did not detect their presence until they opened fire at close range."¹⁹

Returning fire, the Americans managed to reach the tree line, where some fought hand to hand. Alerted that the company commander had been wounded and the executive officer killed, Lieutenant Kapica took charge. Facing imminent disaster, the lieutenant pulled the company back toward EAGLE while gunship fire covered his front and flanks. At 1930 a CH-47 attempted to extract Kapica's men, but it went down in a hail of fire. Convinced that any additional attempt at extraction would also fail, Hennessey instructed Kapica to form a perimeter. The lieutenant did so, centering on the downed Chinook. He had less than a hundred men left, ammunition was low, and the unit's water was nearly gone. At 0130, 31 March, American aircraft attempted to relieve the situation by making two passes over the position to drop ammunition and food. Neither delivery landed inside the perimeter, but the troops managed to retrieve the nearest supplies, which contained enough ammunition to withstand a sizeable attack.²⁰

Although the North Vietnamese outside the perimeter conducted occasional probes, they mounted no major assault during the night, possibly because of the heavy fire support American commanders brought to bear. Huey gunships hammered the area throughout the night, expending some seventeen hundred 2.75-inch rockets. Meanwhile, Company A, 1st of the 8th Cavalry, deployed at 0105 and secured Landing Zone CAT about nine kilometers east of EAGLE. Battery A, 2d Battalion, 19th Artillery, followed a short while later and fired its first round in support of EAGLE at 0310. Air Force fighters were also present, flying five sorties before dawn.²¹

Faced with this onslaught, the North Vietnamese slipped away sometime during the early morning hours of the thirty-first. The troopers counted 197 enemy killed and estimated that another 217 might also have fallen. Their own casualties are unclear. Fourteen Americans perished in the crash of the Huey on the thirtieth and almost certainly more in the fighting.²²

Combat at and around EAGLE triggered the movement of the rest of the 1st Brigade to positions south of the Chu Pong Massif. Colonel Beard's 1st of the 12th Cavalry took the lead, deploying to EAGLE on the morning of 31 March to search for any North Vietnamese that remained. Policing the area, the troops retrieved the enemy's dead and abandoned equipment and exchanged fire with small bands of stragglers. In the meantime, Hennessey's command post moved to CAT, where the rest of Broughton's 1st of the 8th Cavalry soon arrived to become the brigade reserve. By the end of the day Hemphill's 2d of the 8th Cavalry had also shifted south of the massif, taking up station about twenty-five hundred meters north of the Lop. Artillery elements entered the area to support the expanded effort.²³

While Colonel Hennessey was repositioning his brigade, Generals Kinnard and Larsen were reevaluating the situation. Periodic intelligence reports since November had indicated the presence of a division-level command and the 32d, 33d, and 66th Regiments in the vicinity of the Chu Pong Massif. With the fight on 30 March evidence of increased enemy activity in the area, the two generals decided to seize the moment and expand the hunt with a larger force. On the thirty-first Larsen assigned Colonel Stoutner's 3d Brigade to LINCOLN, placing the 25th Division unit under the operational

control of Kinnard's 1st Cavalry Division. At the same time, Kinnard assigned his own 3d Brigade under Colonel Moore to the operation. Their actions created a division-size force that combined Moore's and Hennessey's airmobile brigades with Stoutner's more traditional "heavy" brigade.

The new troops started to deploy on 31 March. By the end of the next day Stoutner's 3d Brigade, two battalions strong for the operation, had moved north by convoy from Ban Brieng to the region around Duc Co. The two battalions established their laagers about eighteen kilometers southwest and southeast of the Special Forces camp and just north of the Ia Drang, where they would be well positioned for forays into the territory around the massif. Meanwhile, Moore's 3d Brigade, also two battalions strong, established its forward command post at Plei Me.²⁴

The three brigades began their work in earnest on 2 and 3 April by searching the jungle around the massif. Stoutner's 3d Brigade covered the area north of the mountain, Hennessey's 1st Brigade operated south, and Moore's 3d Brigade scoured the middle ground. Except for a brief clash between the 1st Brigade's 1st of the 12th Cavalry and a reinforced North Vietnamese company that produced some 15 enemy dead, their searches made little contact.²⁵

The main event came on 4 April, when General Kinnard sent Hennessey's brigade off to the border to interdict likely escape routes and Stoutner's and Moore's against the Chu Pong Massif itself. Backed by lavish fire support, including medium and heavy tubes from I Field Force artillery, Stoutner's battalions attacked south onto the mountain and Moore's struck from the east. Throughout the day the four battalions traversed the massif, hunting for North Vietnamese. One battalion fought several fleeting skirmishes with small units, killing 7 of the enemy, but in general the searchers found no one to fight. The picture changed little on the fifth and sixth. Gunships from both the 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry, and the 2d Battalion, 20th Artillery, fired upon small groups withdrawing toward Cambodia, but the large unit encounter that Kinnard had sought failed to develop. Consequently, on the seventh, Stoutner's 3d Brigade returned to Pleiku City. Hennessey's and Moore's brigades withdrew the next day, putting an end to the operation.²⁶

After reviewing LINCOLN'S objective, which was to anticipate and disrupt the Communists' preparations for rainy season operations, General Kinnard seemed satisfied with the effort. "I think," he concluded, "we. . . pushed their timetable back." That judgment, however, was purely subjective, for neither he nor MACV's intelligence analysts were particularly sure of what the timetable was. At the same time, the body count was impressive. Kinnard and his men claimed to have killed 477 soldiers and possibly another 232. Forty-three Americans lost their lives.²⁷

With LINCOLN over, American commanders began to reconsider the significance of the Chu Pong to the enemy. Colonel Hennessey was especially convinced of its importance and strongly supported periodic return visits by battalion combat teams. As he told General Kinnard, "Just put them on the ground for maybe 3-4 days and let them operate

with the Cav Troop, with perhaps an artillery battery and let them look around the area and stir (things) up a bit." Kinnard filed the suggestions for future consideration.²⁸

In his next operation, MOSBY I, General Kinnard sought to interdict North Vietnamese infiltration routes along the Cambodian border from Highway 19 to a point seventy kilometers north. Hennessey's 1st and Moore's 3d Brigades received the assignment. Preparations involved establishing a divisional forward command at Kontum City, as well as a temporary base camp at Plei Mrong, about twenty-five kilometers southwest of Kontum, for the 3d Brigade and another at OASIS for the 1st Brigade. Both brigades would work with CIDG companies, whose Montagnard members knew the terrain.

Active operations began the morning of 11 April, as the two brigades landed near the Cambodian border. The 3d Brigade's units patrolled the Dak Hodrai Valley. On the first day Colonel Kampe's 1st of the 7th Cavalry uncovered an abandoned 350-bed field hospital, and the next day patrols from Colonel McDade's 2d of the 7th Cavalry exchanged fire with small groups of enemy soldiers and also, by accident, with a CIDG company. By the thirteenth, however, because so little was happening, Kinnard returned the battalions to An Khe. Meanwhile, to the south, the 1st Brigade's units worked both sides of the Se San river. Their searches came up empty, and the troops withdrew on the seventeenth. In all, the Americans had killed 3 or 4 of the enemy while losing 2 of their own.²⁹

Operation MOSBY II, which commenced on 20 April and ended on 3 May, followed the same approach as LINCOLN and MOSBY I, concentrating initially on a neighborhood east of Highway 14 and between the cities of Pleiku and Kontum. Intelligence reports indicated that enemy units and a political headquarters were in the area. The mission fell to General Kinnard's 2d Brigade, now commanded by Col. Marvin J. Berenzweig.³⁰

On 20 and 21 April the 2d Brigade, which had guarded the division's base camp since mid-March, moved from An Khe to the area of operations by airplane, helicopter, and road. By the end of the day on the twenty-first Colonel Berenzweig had established his command post near the town of Bien Ho and supporting helicopters had moved to the nearby TURKEY FARM. Meanwhile, his three battalions deployed to their assigned sectors to begin the search. The Americans captured a few suspected North Vietnamese soldiers and discovered small quantities of rice and ammunition but little else.

On the twenty-fifth the brigade moved deeper into its target zone. At first, all three battalions were to investigate an expanse about forty kilometers northeast of Bien Ho called Plateau Gi, a relatively inaccessible region of high peaks and valleys near the border of Kontum and Binh Dinh Provinces. However, Berenzweig soon sent one of the battalions to the hamlet of Mang Buk some thirty kilometers northwest of the plateau. None of these operations yielded any appreciable results, and by 3 May two of the battalions had returned to An Khe, concluding Operation MOSBY II. The third remained in the field to take part in another operation.³¹

The Americans suffered no combat deaths during MOSBY II, but 35 were wounded, two-thirds of them from injuries sustained when their boots were punctured by punji stakes—or sharpened bamboo sticks—that were fixed in camouflaged pits along trails. The troops may have killed 3 enemy soldiers, but because they found no bodies, they could not be sure. They did collect a strange assortment of equipment, weapons, and supplies when they explored one enemy camp—a ton of rice, canteens, pistol belts, bangalore torpedoes, field glasses, documents, and a spear.³²

While the 1st Cavalry Division was busy with the two MOSBYs, the 3d Brigade, 25th Division, embarked on Operation LONGFELLOW. The purpose was twofold: to disrupt enemy activity in western Kontum Province north of MOSBY I, and to protect Army engineers repairing a stretch of Highway 14 running northward from the hamlet of Tan Canh, near Dak To, to the Special Forces camp at Dak Pek. Keeping one battalion back in reserve, the brigade's new commander, Brig. Gen. Glenn D. Walker, deployed his remaining two infantry battalions, artillery, and a CIDG company to Tan Canh on 15—16 April, with active operations beginning on the seventeenth, the last day of MOSBY I.³³

Over the next two weeks company-size units searched pre-designated sectors for signs of the enemy. After combing one sector, the companies would move to new search zones by foot, by truck, or by helicopters provided by the 52d Aviation Battalion. Although enemy units twice ambushed elements of the South Vietnamese 24th Special Tactical Zone that were working with the Americans, the 3d Brigade failed to generate significant contacts. On 30 April, as soon as the engineers had completed their work on the highway, General Walker terminated the operation. By then, he and his men figured that they had killed 11 of the enemy at a cost of 3 of their own. They had also suffered 108 wounded, many to booby traps.³⁴

By the time LONGFELLOW ended, the southwest monsoon season had begun, bringing with it daily showers and increasingly heavy cloud cover. This was the moment the North Vietnamese had been waiting for, when adverse weather conditions would conceal their movements, bog down allied vehicles, ground American helicopters, and minimize the effects of allied air power. Only time would tell if American spoiling operations had succeeded in disrupting the enemy's monsoon plans.

1 Periodic Intel Rpt, 1 Jan—30 Jun 66, MACV. 20 Aug 66, p.6, MHI; Western Highlands, pp. 42-43, copy in CMH.

2 Debriefing, Larsen 31 Jul 67, p. 16, Senior Officer Debriefing Program, DA, Historians files, CMH.

3 AAR, Opn MATADOR, 1st Bde, 1st Cav Div (Ambl), 30 Jan 66, p. 4, Historians files, CMH; (Unit History) Jan 66—Jan 70, 3d Bde, 4th Inf Div, n.d., p. 6 (quoted words), box 1, 82/643, RG 338, NARA.

4 ORLL, 1 Jan—30 Apr 66, 3d Bde, 25th Inf Div, 23 Jun 66, p. 6, box 5, 67A/5216, RG 319, NARA; ORLL, 1 Jan—30 Apr 66, I FFV, 15 May 66, inc! 7, Historians files, CMH; AAR, Opn TAYLOR, 3d Bde, 25th Inf Div, 31 Mar 66, p. 2, box 2, 82/655, RG 338, NARA.

5 AAR, Opn GARFIELD, 3d Bde, 25th Inf Div, 19 Apr 66, pp. 7—8, box 2, 82/655, RG 338, NARA.

6 Msg, CG, FFV, 1467 to CO. 3d Bde, 25th Inf Div, 4 Mar 66, box 5, 69A/702, RG 334, NARA.

7 Memo, Brig Gen Glenn D. Walker, CG, 3d Bde, 25th Inf Div, for Headquarters (HQ), DA, 28 Sep 66, sub: Valorous Unit Award, box 1, 82/643, RG 338, NARA.

8 Ibid.

9 AAR, Opn GARFIELD, 3d Bde, 25th Inf Div. pp. 8—9.

10 Ibid., pp. 4, 6, 14.

11 AAR, Opn LINC0LN/MosBY I, 1st Cav Div (Ambl), n.d., p. 5; Intel Bull, DIA, Mar 66, p. A2. Both in Historians files, CMH.

12 Msg, CG, I FFV, 1818 to COMUSMACV, 18 Mar 66, sub: COMUSMACV Visit, Box 2, 69A/702, RG 334, NARA.

13 AARs, Opn LINC0LN, 1st Bde, 1st Cav Div (Ambi), 21 Apr 66, pp. 1, 6-7, and Div Arty, 1st Cav Div (Ambl), 22 Apr 66, p. 2, Historians files, CMH; AAR, Opn LINC0LN/MOSBY I, 1st Cav Div, p. 9.

14 AAR, Opn LINC0LN/MOSSY 1, 1st Cav Div, p. 6; AAR, Opn LINC0LN if/Mossy 1, 3d Bde, 1st Cav Div (Ambl), 27 Apr 66, p. , Historians files, CMH.

15 AAR, Opn LINC0LN, 1st Bde, 1st Cav Div. pp. 6-7; AAR, Opn LINC0LN, 1st Sqdn, 9th Cav, 1 May 66, p. 4, Historians files, CMH.

16 AAR, Opn LINC0LN, 1st Bde, 1st Cav Div, pp. 7—13.

17 AAR, Opn LINC0LN, 1st Sqdn, 9th Cav, p. 6; Su Doan 325 (1954-1975) 325th Division (1954-1975)], 2 vols. (Hanoi: Nha Xuat Ban Quan Doi Nhan Dan (Peoples army Publishing house), 1981-86, 2:41, copy in CMH; Interv, author with Robert J. Destatte, 20 Oct 98, Historian files CMH; Col William E Legro, 'Vietnam From Cease-Fire to Capitulation' (Washington DC: US Army Center of Military History, 1981, p 38

18 AAR, Opn LINC0LN, 1st Sqdn, 9th Cav, pp. 2, 6.

19 AAR, Opn LINC0LN/MOSBY I, 1st Cav Div, incl. 4, p. 1.

20 Ibid., p. 12.

21 Ibid., p. 2; AAR, Opn LINC0LN, 1st Bde, 1st Cav Div, p. 20.

22 AAR, Opn LINC0LN, 1st Sqdn, 9th Cav, p. 1; Rpt, 14th Mu Hit Det, 1st Cav Div, 9 Jun 67, sub: Seven Month History and Briefing Data (September 1965—March 1966), p. 60, box 16, 74/053, RG 319, NARA.

23 AAR, Opn LINC0LN, 1st Bde, 1st Cav Div, pp. 13-14.

24 AAR, Opn LINC0LN, 3d Bde, 25th Inf Div, 25 Apr 66, pp. 2-3, box 2, 82/655, RG 338, NARA; AAR, Opn LINC0LN III/MOSBY I, 3d Bde, 1st Cav Div, pp. 4-5.

25 AARs, Opn LINC0LN, 3d Bde, 25th Inf Div. p. 2, and 1st Bde, 1st Cav Div, pp. 15-16; AAR, Opn LINC0LN III/MOSBY I, 3d Bde, 1st Cav Div. pp. 5-6.

26 AAR, Opn LINC0LN/MOSBY 1, 1st Cav Div, pp. 14—15.

27 Ibid., p. 18; Critique, Opn LINC0LN, 1st Cav Div (Ambl), 3 May 66, p. 9 (quotation), Historians files, CMH.

28 Critique, Opn LINC0LN, 1st Cav Div, pp. 2—3 (quotation), 9.

29 AAR, Opn LINC0LN/MOSBY 1, 1st Cav Div, pp. 16—17; Rpt, 14th Mil Hist Det, 1st Cav Div, 9 Jun 67, sub: Seven Month History and Briefing Data (September 1965—March 1966), pp. 63—66; AAR, Opns LINC0LN and MOSBY, 1st Bn, 7th Cav, 19 Apr 66, pp. 2—3, Historians files, CMH.

30 AAR, Opn MOSBY II, 2d Bde, 1st Cav Div (Amb!), 29 May 66, pp. 1—5, Historians files, CMH; ORLL, 1 Jan—30 Apr 66, 1st Cav Div, p. 28, box 6, 67A/5216, RG 319, NARA.

31 AAR, Opn MOSBY II, 2d Bde, 1st Cav Div, p. 4. 32 Ibid., p. 11.

33 AAR, Opn LONGFELLOW, 3d Bde, 25th Inf Div, 5 May 66, p. 7, box 2, 82/655, RG 338, NARA.

34 *ibid.*, pp. 3—4, 9.