

From Kaneohe, To Vietnam, And Back - Welcome Home 1/27



WATCH YOUR STEP - Charging off their landing craft during training exercises off the western tip of Molokai, Hawaii, are Leathernecks of the First Battalion, 27th Marine Regiment. Constant training exercises before their Vietnam deployment last February, kept the Kaneohe Bay Marines in a high state of readiness.

1/27 Summoned Fort Vietnam Last February

When the President of the United States called for 10,500 more troops for Vietnam, during the Communists' Tet offensive early this year, the 27th Marine Regiment was ready to move within 48 hours.

The regiment's First Battalion, then commanded by Lieutenant Colonel John E. Greenwood, was aboard ship enroute to a SEATO training the Second and Third Battalions were staging at the Camp Pendleton, California, Marine Base.

By the end of February, the 27th Marines had completed its deployment to Vietnam and was assigned the mission of patrolling the "rocket belt" south of the Da Nang military complex. The regiment was then reinforced by the Second Battalion, 13th Marine Regiment, which provided artillery support.

The 27th Marine Regiment and its attached artillery battalion were both Fifth Marine Division units. The Fifth Division was activated during World War II, trained in Hawaii, and participated in the seizure of Iwo Jima before going to Japan for occupation duty.

Deactivated in 1946, the division was recalled to the active duty rolls in 196 at Camp Pendleton, Calif.

While in Vietnam, the 27th Marines and supporting battalion, came under the First Marine Division, the same division their parent command replaced at Camp Pendleton more than two years ago.

Kahuku Area Site for Final Training Here

A four-day field exercise at the Kahuku Training Area on Oahu in late November, 1967, provided the Leathernecks of the First Battalion, 27th Marine Regiment, with their final off-station training before they were scheduled to sail in February to take part in SEATO exercises in the far east.

At Kahuku, they were pitted against an "aggressor" force that had "invaded" a small nation and disrupted the legal government. Marines from other First Marine Brigade units acted as enemy guerrillas during the exercise.

After the exercise was concluded, the battalion returned to their home at Kaneohe Bay to prepare for the scheduled SEATO maneuvers. Intensive small unit training and night problems in Air Station training areas marked their preparations for their journey.

The SEATO exercises were cancelled after the troops were on their way aboard Navy ships and they were diverted to Vietnam to help suppress the Communists' Tet offensive.



FIRE FOR EFFECT - A Marine lieutenant adjusts artillery fire on enemy automatic weapons positions near the Cam Le Bridge's RLT 27, including the First Battalion, 27th Marines, engaged Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army units August 24. Marine Major Albert "Mike" Leahy sketched the action which took place south of Da Nang, South Vietnam.



FIRE FIGHT - Marines engage enemy forces at the Cam Le Bridge, as sketched by Major Albert "Mike" Leahy. RLT 27, including the First Battalion, 27th Marines, engaged Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army forces at the Cam Le Bridge, south of Da Nang, South Vietnam. The action took place August 24.

Unless otherwise noted all photos are Official Marine Corps Photographs and stories originated from the Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, Headquarters, Camp H. M. Smith.

Major Gen. Paul Fontana Praises 1/27's Actions

(The following remarks were made by Major General Paul J. Fontana, Deputy Commander, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, during recognition ceremonies for Battalion Landing Team 1/27 at Hickam Air Force Base, Tuesday, Editor)

"Seven months ago, when President Johnson ordered the 27th Marines to Vietnam to bolster American forces in the I Corps area during the Communists' Tet offensive, Battalion Landing Team 1/27 was afloat - enroute to a SEATO training exercise.

"We Marines, by our very nature, are expeditionary creatures. Our job is to be ready to go. So when the call came, BLT 1/27 was ready. The seemingly endless exercises in the hills of the Koolaus and Kahuku, and across the beaches of Molokai, paid off in demonstrated readiness. When the redeployment orders came, the ships changed course and the command group landed at Da Nang on February 23.

"March was a busy month for the Marines of 1/27. They conducted more than 500 patrols, 200 ambushes and eight company-sized sweep and clear missions in and around the Da Nang rocket belt, before being sent north to Hue.

"1/27 was heavily engaged in combat around Hue during April, where they accounted for 75

BLT 1/27

The First Battalion, 27th Marine Regiment, was reactivated June 1, 1966, at the Marine Corps Air Station, Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii. The unit was assigned to the First Marine Brigade as the infantry arm of the Corps' unique air-ground team.

Originally, the 27th Marine Regiment formed at Camp Pendleton, California in December, 1943, as part of the Fifth Marine Division. In August, 1944, the regiment moved with the Fifth Division to Camp Tarawa, Hawaii (near Kamuela), where they began training for the invasion of Iwo Jima.

The First Battalion, then commanded by LtCol. John A. Butler, landed on Red Beach Two on February 19, 1945, D-Day on Iwo Jima.

Two months later the battalion came back to Hawaii to rest and train for the next planned assault. Following the Japanese surrender, marking the end of World War II, the unit went to Japan for occupation duty with the rest of the Fifth Division.

After three months at the Sasebo Navy Yard, the First Battalion, 27th Marine Regiment, returned to the United States and then was disbanded in January, 1946.

During the 19 months at Kaneohe Bay before their deployment to Vietnam in February, 1968, the unit trained continuously. In addition to field exercises throughout the State of Hawaii, they took part in Operation Alligator Hide at Camp Pendleton, California in May, 1967.

enemy dead, seven prisoners and 44 captured weapons. Returning to Da Nang in mid-May, they went into action with other elements of the 27th Marines on Operation Allen Brook.

"The operation continued into June, with 1/27 heading up the operation that cleared some 659,000 square meters of countryside and destroyed more than 35,000 meters of trenchline, 290 bunkers, 250 spider holes, and 20 tunnels and caves.

"The battalion returned to its tactical area of responsibility near Da Nang, where the Marines engaged in patrolling, search and destroy missions, and action defending Da Nang from enemy attack - including the fierce battle at Cam Le bridge during the closing days of August.

"During their seven-month stay in Vietnam, combat was not the sole preoccupation of the 1/27 Marines. Whenever circumstances permitted, they were deeply involved in the Marine Corps' Civic Action Program, which included medical and dental treatment of Vietnamese citizens, and the distribution of food, clothing and building materials to the people of that war-torn country.

"And now, having fulfilled its role as a "fire brigade", having accomplished its emergency mission, 1/27 has come home to Hawaii. During the next few months, the battalion will rebuild around the nucleus of combat veterans whom we honor today. It will resume its forward readiness posture, prepared to put out other fires if the need arises.

"The Marines of BLT 1/27 have provided the citizens of this country with a graphic demonstration of their ability to deploy rapidly and to carry out the mission effectively in Vietnam. And, sadly, they have added new names to that long roster of gallant men of our Corps who have given their lives in the cause of freedom.

"And so today we pause in our daily routine to welcome BLT 1/27 home, but our presence here would be merely an empty gesture if we do not as individual - Marine and civilians alike - resolve to embrace our duties as citizens with the same unity of purpose as these Marines who have fought a good fight.

"Let us resolve to safeguard the way of life and freedoms that brave men have won for us.

"Inspired by the deeds of the courageous men who, under the colors of Battalion 1/27, responded to their country's call, armed with the ideals for which our country stands, and strong with the determination to safeguard the blessings of liberty for all mankind, we can look to the future with courage and confidence."



THE HUNT - On patrol, Leathernecks of the First Battalion, 27th Marine Regiment cautiously pick their way through heavy underbrush south of Da Nang, South Vietnam, searching for the Viet Cong and watching for VC booby-traps.

'Well Done'

"Well done, bon voyage and God bless you," remarked Major General Carl A. Youngdale as the Leathernecks of Regimental Landing Team 27 (RLT 27) left Vietnam for their bases in Hawaii and California.

General Youngdale, Commanding General of the First Marine Division, was in operational control of the RLT in Vietnam.

In a message to the 27th Marines, the general said, "The contribution the the cause of freedom and the support of the First Marine Division made by RLT 27 during their seven months in Vietnam, is recognized and greatly appreciated by the entire Marine Corps and the United States Government."

It was during the Communists' Tet offensive that RLT 27, including the First Battalion, 27th Marines from Kaneohe Bay, and the Second and Third Battalions from Camp Pendleton, California, were deployed to Vietnam to bolster Free World Forces in the

Corps Tactical Zone of South Vietnam.

"However, no one can appreciate the vital assistance you gave as much as we of the First Division," General Youngdale continued. "Many of your Marines voluntarily returned to Vietnam before they had been in the U. S. as much as a year, and many others have voluntarily extended to stay for a full tour although eligible to return home."

Some 100 Marine and Navy officers and men returned to Hawaii with the 1/27's colors Tuesday. They will form the nucleus of the battalion during the coming months as it reforms at the Kaneohe Bay Air Station.

"This spirit of allegiance to the Marine Corps and the cause of the free world is typical of RLT 27," the general concluded, "and the officers and men of the First Division are aware of the sacrifices made during your service as a member of this division. We are proud to have had you as our



"I HAVE A TARGET" - Serving with the First Battalion, 27th Marines, a Marine is seen in a bomb crater for positions near Hue.

1/27 Marines Earn 145 Medals For Acts of Valor During Combat

During some seven months in Vietnam, 1/27 Leathernecks earned 20 Silver Stars, 73 Bronze Stars, and 52 Navy Commendation Medals for acts of valor and meritorious conduct during combat. In addition, recommendations for two Navy Crosses, five Silver Stars, two Bronze Stars and a Navy Commendation Medal are pending final action.

On numerous occasions they fought against overwhelming odds and under extraordinary circumstances. The record indicated that both as a unit and individually, they responded quickly, courageously and well to the trials and rigors of combat.

The actions of Corporal Allen G. Arbogast, a Fire Team Leader with 1/27's "A" Company, were reflective of the leadership, courage, and aggressiveness displayed by the battalion's young Marines. Arbogast was awarded the Silver Star Medal for his actions near Hue last April. His

citation reads as follows:

"For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action while serving as a Fire Team Leader with Company "A", First Battalion, 27th Marine Regiment, First Marine Division in connection with operations against the enemy in the Republic of Vietnam. On the morning of 31 April 1968, while participating in a search and clear operation two miles east of Hue, Corporal Arbogast's platoon came under heavy small arms, automatic weapons, mortar and rocket fire from a well entrenched North Vietnamese Army platoon, temporarily pinning down his unit and wounding several Marines. Rapidly assessing the situation, Corporal Arbogast skillfully deployed his men and directed their fire against the enemy emplacements. Observing heavy fire coming from two machine guns in one of the hostile positions, he ignored the danger from the intense North Vietnamese fire as he delivered

fire from his M-79 grenade launcher and then crawled within ten meters of the emplacement to throw hand grenades. His singlehanded assault against the enemy position resulted in the destruction of both weapons and seven North Vietnamese soldiers killed and enabled his platoon to resume its advance. Obtaining additional ammunition, he continued to deliver highly effective M-79 grenade fire against other hostile emplacements. Completely disregarding his own safety, he repeatedly exposed himself to hostile fire to assist in evacuating wounded Marines from the fire-sweep area to the casualty staging area for medical evacuation. By his courage, bold initiative and selfless devotion to duty at great personal risk, Corporal Arbogast inspired all who observed him and upheld the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and of the United States Naval Service."

New Commander

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Navy Commendation Medal with Combat "V", the Presidential Unit Citation, the Navy Unit Commendation, the Marine Corps Good Conduct Medal, the American Campaign, Asiatic-Pacific Campaign with one star, the World War II Victory, the National Defense Service Medal with one star, the Korean Service Medal with two stars, the United Nations Service Medal, the Vietnam Service Medal with two stars, and the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal.

He is married to the former Miss Cordelia Ann Curley of Chula Vista, Calif. The Palmer's have two sons, Robert E. B. Jr.,



"GO GET 'EM" - After heavy fighting, the lead element of a First Battalion, 27th Marine Regiment, commences morning patrol operations near Hue.