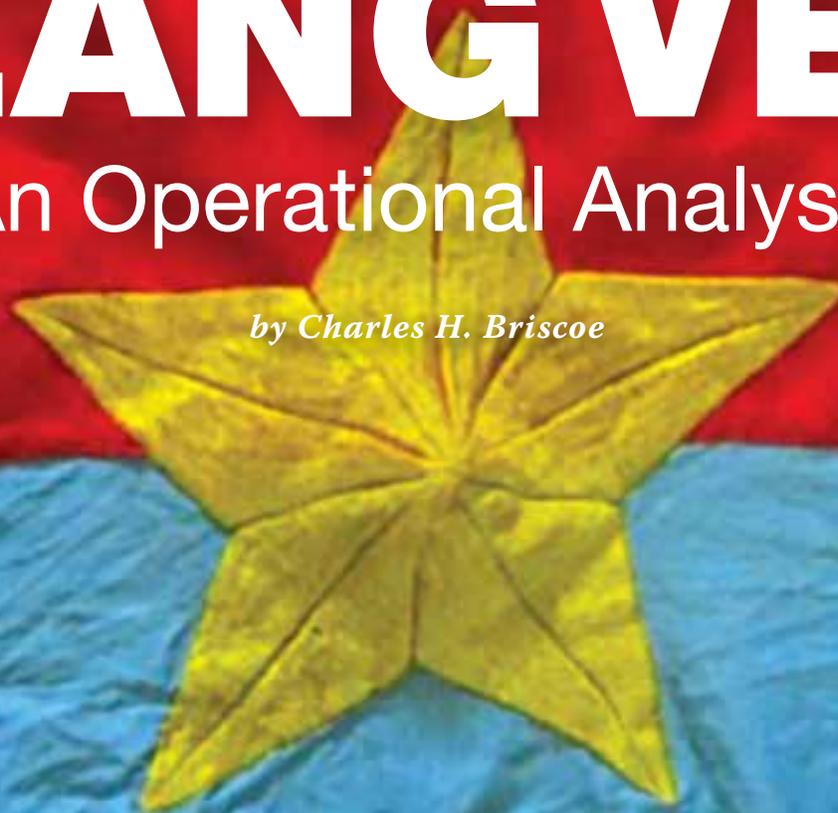


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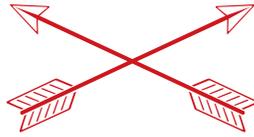
The Battle of **LANG VEI**

An Operational Analysis

by Charles H. Briscoe



CHIẾN THẮNG LANG VEI
1968



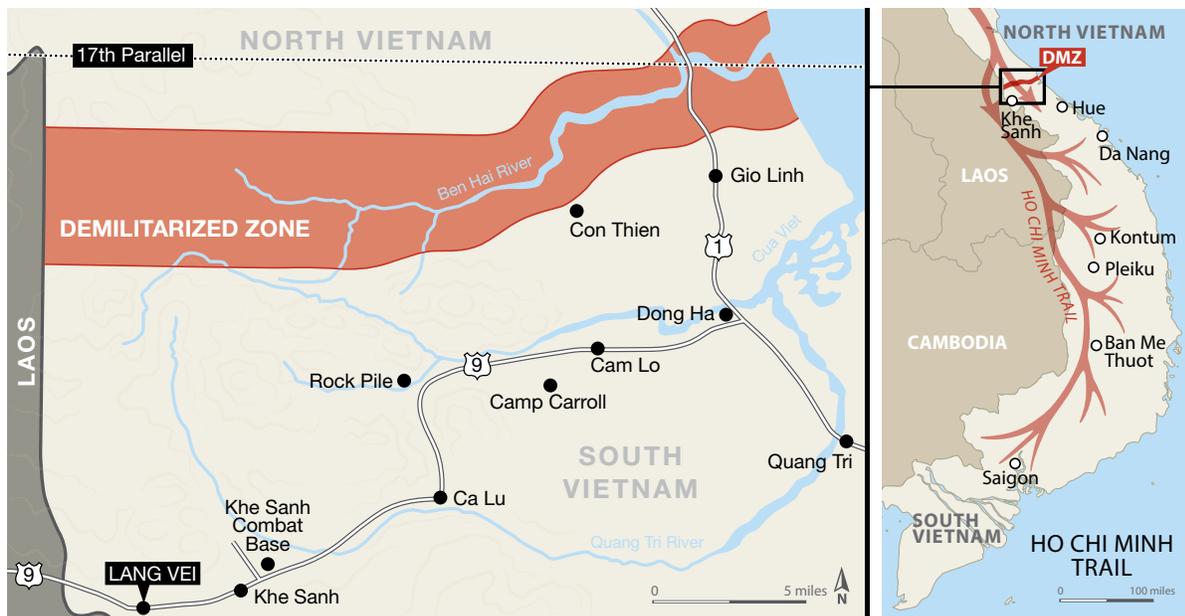
ABSTRACT: During the Tet Offensive of 1968, a North Vietnamese Army (NVA) tank-led infantry task force overran the northernmost Special Forces (SF) border camp in ninety minutes. It was not a stellar moment for American SF, but Lang Vei blocked direct access to the Khe Sanh Marine base. More importantly, it marked North Vietnam's shift from supporting a Communist insurgency to conquering democratic South Vietnam by conventional warfare.

This operational analysis illustrates how a lack of preparedness for an enemy armor attack led to the loss of the Lang Vei SF camp on 7 February 1968. It addresses the first NVA tank employment in South Vietnam, and commemorates veterans of the Vietnam War.¹ Early in that war, SF camps were established near highway border crossings into Laos and Cambodia. The principal NVA supply and infiltration route, the north-south Ho Chi Minh trail, was just inside country frontiers. The eastern geographical border of northern Laos, the thigh-deep Se Pone River, was less than a mile from Lang Vei along Highway 9.²

The primary SF border camp mission was surveillance; area pacification was secondary.³ The camps were to become a nuisance to North Vietnamese personnel and supply infiltrations.⁴ American SF Operational Detachments-Alpha (ODAs) advised the South Vietnamese SF teams 'supervising' local Civilian

Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) soldiers. These volunteers were to defend their camp and actively patrol out to three kilometers to disrupt enemy activity.⁵ Camps were named after the nearest village where CIDG families lived.⁶

Five miles east of Lang Vei was the Bru Montagnard village at Khe Sanh and nearby 26th Marine Regiment combat base. The Marines were eighteen miles below the demilitarized zone (DMZ) to reduce North Vietnamese access.⁷ In the spring of 1967, Marine infantry companies fought hard to displace the NVA dug in on mountains overlooking their base. At the same time, Communist South Vietnamese insurgents (Viet Cong [VC]) collapsed eight of the nine vehicle bridges on Highway 9. The attempt to move a 175 mm artillery battery to Khe Sanh to counter the NVA 152 mm artillery in Laos, failed when its convoy was ambushed just six miles outside of Da Nang. The NVA fired 120 mm B-40 rockets from the mountains and one hit their ammo dump



This map shows how the Lang Vei SF Camp, closer to Laos than the old site, served as an obstacle to deter ground attacks on the U.S. Marine base at Khe Sanh. On the far right the Ho Chi Minh Trail is shown.

Previous page: A North Vietnamese Army battle flag embroidered with Lang Vei commemorating the 7 February 1968 victory.



View of Lang Vei village in March 1967 before it was mistakenly bombed by U.S. Air Force F-4 *Phantoms*.

destroying ninety percent of the stores. Daily resupply planes landed and took off under enemy artillery fire.⁸

To further complicate the situation VC destroyed the original Lang Vei SF camp.⁹ After dark on 3 May 1967, VC sympathizers in the camp helped an attack force to get inside the wire. The two American SF officers, singled out, were killed outright. Most of the SF sergeants were wounded, rendering Detachment A-101 (Det A-101) combat ineffective.¹⁰

The 5th SF Group (SFG) quickly reconstituted Det A-101 and had helicoptered it back to Lang Vei before Captain (CPT) Frank C. Willoughby arrived in June. He was directed to rebuild and improve the old camp or find a better location for a new 'fighting camp.' The infantry officer saw that the old site was not defensible. A dog bone-shaped hillock overlooking Route 9 between Lang Vei village and the Laotian border was chosen. It could hold four CIDG companies instead of two and its elevation and lack of vegetation supported interlocking final protective fires.¹¹

The construction of fighting bunkers, machinegun positions, mortar pits, and command centers, daily patrolling, camp security, and CIDG recruiting had Det A-101 personnel running ragged.¹² CPT Willoughby sought help from the 5th SFG Company C commander, Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Daniel F. Schungel. In mid-June 1967, a 36-man Seabee Team with its heavy equipment was helicoptered from Da Nang (Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 11).¹³ Still, protecting the Seabees while patrolling and maintaining camp security proved difficult.¹⁴

LTC Schungel began to incrementally airlift an SF-led Hré Montagnard company from his Mobile

Strike Force (MSF) before Thanksgiving. By mid-December 1967, First Lieutenant (1LT) Paul R. Longgear, who had been elevated from platoon leader to company commander, had his entire MSF company at Lang Vei. Daily patrols detected enemy presence, strength, and intentions while night ambushes kept the NVA at a distance. Monitoring the Ho Chi Minh trail was another duty. The American SF soldiers daily commanded and led the parachute-qualified MSF 'strikers' on combat missions.¹⁵ On the other hand, Det A-101 SF personnel advised the South Vietnamese SF who directed Bru CIDG elements on patrols and in camp defense. The 'aggressive' Hré Montagnard fighters of the MSF were restricted to an observation post (OP) eight hundred meters away.¹⁶ The Navy construction engineers strengthened U.S. positions.

The Navy Seabees 'hardened' crew-served weapon pits inside the inner perimeter wire (used by the Americans) with 8 inch thick reinforced concrete walls. They did the same with the operations (ops) bunker. Heavy steel plate entrance, exit, and tower doors controlled access. A prefabricated, reinforced concrete ceiling slab 9 inches thick was topped with 8 by 8 inch wood timbers and laden with sand bags for overhead cover. A 4 foot by 4 foot wide observation tower at one



Pocket patch for the 1 Corps Mobile Strike Force

corner of the operations bunker contained an M60 7.62 mm machinegun. The ops bunker was 39 feet by 25 feet and had a 10 foot high ceiling. There were no gun ports because it was not intended as a fighting bunker.¹⁷

Just beyond the outer concertina wire NVA reconnaissance teams blatantly watched the construction with binoculars until driven off by small arms fire. The Seabees only improved the inner wire perimeter; CIDG fighting positions along the outer perimeter were sandbagged and had minimal overhead cover. North Vietnamese Antonov An-2 *Colt* biplanes flew over Lang Vei and occasionally dropped 82 mm mortar rounds to the amusement of the SF soldiers.¹⁸ The Navy finished work on 26 November 1967.¹⁹ When daily security patrols encountered NVA units, the enemy broke contact, but tank sightings on the Ho Chi Minh trail increased.²⁰



The Lang Vei SF Operations bunker photo was taken by a Navy Seabee in 1967.



The 33rd Royal Laotian Elephant Battalion and their families filled Highway 9 for miles.

During the night of 21-22 January 1968, an NVA force attacked Khe Sanh village. The 105 mm and 155 mm artillery support from the Marine combat base a mile away prevented the enemy from overrunning a CIDG regional force/province force (RF/PF) security platoon and a reinforce village defenses U.S. Army advisory team.²¹ After the 26th Marines declined to send a relief force to or to cover their evacuation, and they rejected an MSF offer to assist, Army CPT Bruce B.G. Clarke, his advisory team, and the RF/PF element walked to the combat base trailed by Bru Montagnard refugees. U.S. personnel were allowed to enter; all indigenous were not.²² Road access to the Lang Vei SF border camp was severed. Two days later, Highway 9, old Lang Vei, and the Bru Montagnard village were inundated with Laotians fleeing the NVA.²³

On 24 January 1968, the NVA, reportedly supported by tanks, stampeded the 33rd Royal Laotian Elephant Battalion (520 soldiers) and 2,200 dependents from Tchepone across the border towards Lang Vei.²⁴ Aerial reports of tank sightings and corroborating ground evidence were set aside when Company C, 5th SFG was ordered to support the refugees. An SF major or lieutenant colonel was to liaison daily with the Laotian battalion commander. Three SF medics were flown into old Lang Vei to treat the sick and arrange daily deliveries of food, water, and supplies to the Laotian 'squatters' in the remains of the old camp and adjacent Bru Montagnard village.²⁵

The next day Specialist Fourth Class (SP4) John A. Young, a new weapons specialist, was sent from Company C to help Sergeant First Class (SFC) Eugene Ashley, Jr. at old Lang Vei. Twenty-four hours later (26 January 1968), SP4 Young, leading some Laotian volunteers, ignored his 'orientation patrol' limits to enter Khe Sanh village. The Laotians fled when they realized that the village was occupied by NVA. They abandoned their American patrol 'leader.' Specialist Young was captured and his fate reported to SFC Ashley and SFC William T. Craig, the Det A-101 team sergeant.²⁶ Five days later on 31 January, an MSF platoon surprised the NVA security element relaxing in the village. The American leaders reported fifty-four killed and even more wounded. Enemy reinforcements forced the MSF platoon to withdraw, covered by artillery and airstrikes. They carried out more than 30 weapons (mercenary reward money). When CPT Willoughby returned from his Hawaii R & R (rest and relaxation), he discounted the tank threat, but strengthened night defenses in the camp with two of the MSF Hré Montagnard platoons despite inter-tribal tensions.²⁷

The Laotian problem in the 'backyard' of the fighting camp (old Lang Vei and its Bru Montagnard village

were between the new camp and the Marine base) diverted attention from the possibility of an NVA attack during the Tet holiday ceasefire.²⁸ Security in the SF camp hit 'rock bottom' on 30 January 1968. An NVA deserter (Private Luong Dinh Du) armed with his AK-47 assault rifle walked through the main gate by the two sleeping Bru guards straight into the SF team house unchallenged. There, he confronted a flabbergasted, weaponless Det A-101 team sergeant preparing breakfast. The deserter told SFC Craig that his battalion executive officer and some sappers had scouted camp defenses two days earlier.²⁹

Despite this blatant security breach and imminent attack warning, the alert condition in the camp was not heightened.³⁰ The country-wide Communist attacks during the Tet holiday ceasefire seemed very distant from the northernmost SF border camp.³¹ But, the NVA did not ignore them. Daily 152 mm and 122 mm artillery and 120 mm mortar barrages from Co Roc mountain in Laos had become routine. The Americans had assumed a cavalier attitude. They would deal with whatever happened, when it did. But, as Bru desertions grew, their ability to fend off a major attack was reduced.³²

During the afternoon of 6 February 1968, LTC Schungel flew in to replace Major (MAJ) Wilbur Hoadley as the SF field grade liaison officer to the Laotian commander.³³ His helicopter attracted a fifty-round artillery barrage that wounded several Bru CIDG. Instead of visiting old Lang Vei to liaison, LTC Schungel, once again 'took charge' of the SF camp. He grabbed CPT Willoughby and the CIDG sergeant

major to check the bunker line before dark. After several perimeter probes drew small arms fire from some Bru positions, quiet came with the heavy fog that settled over the camp. Fifty percent personnel awake was the standard alert posture.³⁴

The Battle Begins

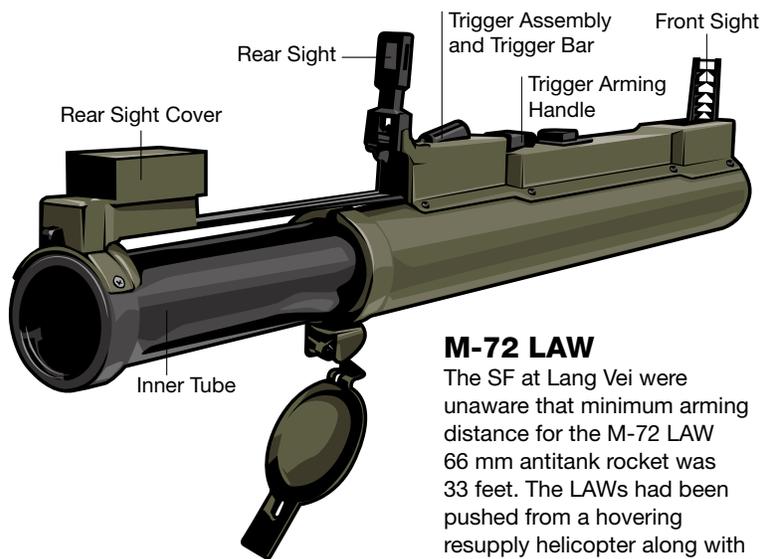
Just before midnight (6-7 February 1968), NVA sappers, intent on cutting entry paths through the outer concertina wire, tripped illumination flares that alerted the defenders. Two Soviet PT-76 amphibious tanks emerged from the eerie, phosphorescent-lit fog closely followed by two battalions of attacking infantry. They were trailed by more sappers, a heavy machinegun company, and a flamethrower platoon. Two tanks from a second PT-76 company and an NVA infantry company overwhelmed the MSF platoon on the OP while the other six tanks blocked major avenues of approach to the camp.³⁵ It was the first time the NVA had employed tanks in the South.³⁶

From the inner perimeter, SF personnel fired 81 mm and 4.2 inch mortar illumination rounds and engaged the PT-76s with their .50 cal heavy machinegun and one M40 106 mm recoilless rifle (RR). To their front, the four half-strength CIDG companies supported by two MSF platoons activated anti-personnel Claymore mines, engaged with small arms and light machinegun fire, and finally threw hand grenades as the NVA onslaught powered over their defensive positions.³⁷

When the two lead PT-76s, whose tank commanders were 'spotlighting' the direction of attack with hand-held

According to *Jane's Armour and Artillery* (1966), the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) had received fifty Soviet PT-76 tanks and fifty BTR-50 armored personnel carriers by 1965.





M-72 LAW

The SF at Lang Vei were unaware that minimum arming distance for the M-72 LAW 66 mm antitank rocket was 33 feet. The LAWs had been pushed from a hovering resupply helicopter along with a cases of C-rations.

searchlights, breached the first line of bunker defenses, the SF-manned 106 RR team ‘killed’ one and disabled the other. Two-man SF tank killer teams, organized and led by LTC Schungel, moved about within the inner perimeter firing M-72 Light Antitank Weapons (LAWs), often point blank. The remaining six tanks proceeded to rumble over the CIDG bunkers from several directions, collapsing them before focusing their firepower on the inner perimeter.³⁸

“It was total chaos...a Wild West fight with Indians everywhere. We were ‘outgunned and vastly outnumbered.’ Everybody outside the ops bunker was doing ‘his own thing.’ Camp defenses were collapsing all around. The NVA tanks and the sapper teams focused first on our ammo and fuel dumps and then the heavy weapon positions to systematically destroy them,” related 1LT Longrear.³⁹

Eventually, two more PT-76s were stopped. As the remaining four tanks directed their 76 mm guns and machineguns on the LAW teams, the Americans dispersed in the darkness. Contact was lost with the OP. No one knew that the NVA tank-infantry task force which wiped out the OP was part of a second tank company blocking all avenues of approach to the camp, to include old Lang Vei. The SF soldiers in the inner wire crawled under buildings; men outside the front entrance of the concrete ops bunker were ordered inside.⁴⁰

Despite illumination from AC-47 ‘Spooky’ gunships overhead and intermittent Marine artillery support from Khe Sanh (fired between incoming barrages from Co Roc mountain), the camp defenses were overwhelmed in ninety minutes. As a satchel charge blast ignited the fuel dump, more charges triggered explosions in the ammunition dump. One PT-76 climbed up the earth-tamped wall of the ops bunker hoping to collapse it with 14.6 tons...without success. The radio communications were lost as antennas atop the bunker were smashed. Lights inside went off when the outside generator cable was cut. The personnel inside lost situational awareness of outside activities.⁴¹

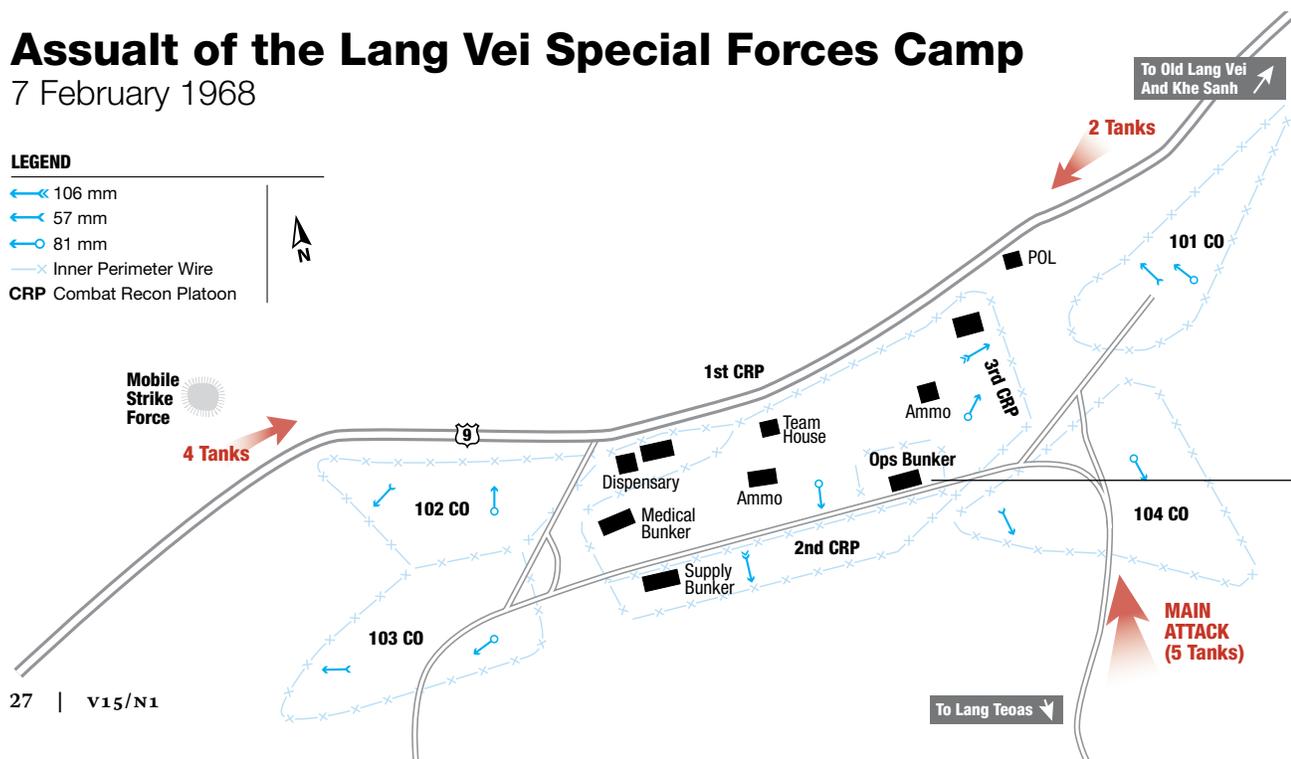
Sappers tamped multiple explosive shaped charges against ops bunker walls in order to breach the reinforced concrete bolstered by packed earth. Concussion, fragmentation, and tear gas grenades were dropped down air shafts and the observation tower. Shrapnel ricocheting inside the bunker and concrete spalling inflicted wounds. Flamethrowers, aimed at steel doors, elevated temperatures inside, set sand bags afire, and channelized liquid fire, fumes, and smoke down air vents, but the Navy Seabee construction proved impenetrable. Blast pressure from the PT-76 mm main guns

Assault of the Lang Vei Special Forces Camp

7 February 1968

LEGEND

- ← 106 mm
- ← 57 mm
- ← 81 mm
- Inner Perimeter Wire
- CRP Combat Recon Platoon



hammering steel doors and shape charges ruptured ear drums and blood vessels in eyes and noses, and concussed the trapped defenders.⁴²

Ground relief by the Marines five miles away was deemed too risky at night. The NVA heavy artillery and mortars bracketing the combat camp and airstrip negated preparations for a daytime airmobile assault. Recall that when Khe Sanh village had been attacked on 22 January, the 26th Marines, a mile and a half away, had declined to assist the Army advisors. In reality a Marine rescue/relief of Lang Vei had been nonviable for months.⁴³

Unknown to those in the concrete bunker, most U.S. and indigenous friendlies still alive above ground were either hiding or attempting to escape and evade the NVA while trying to get to old Lang Vei.⁴⁴ There, the 33rd Royal Laotian Elephant Battalion and more than 1,000 camp followers were being supported by SFC Ashley and two other SF medics. Those three spent the night listening to their radio after all attempts to convince the Laotian commander to intervene were ignored.⁴⁵

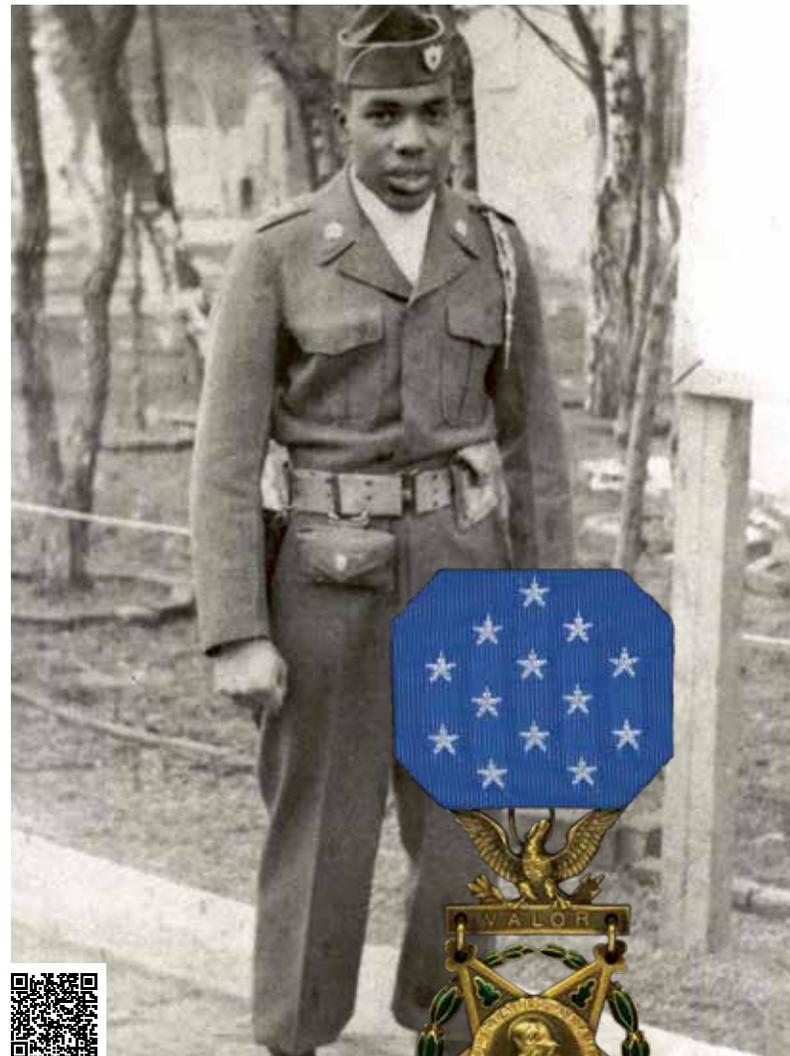
Sometime in the waning hours of darkness, after hours of digging the NVA triggered a massive amount of munitions against the ops bunker. The explosion blew a 4 feet by 8 feet hole by the main entrance. Luckily, half of the hole was below floor level. Occupants were blown against walls and temporarily knocked unconscious. When an English-speaking NVA soldier solicited their surrender with a loudspeaker, promising leniency, he was driven off by a heavy burst of gunfire from a loudly cursing SGT Nicholas Fragos. However, when more tear gas grenades were dropped down the air vents, it was enough. The Vietnamese SF captain and three compatriots decided to surrender. The steel door was slammed shut and locked after the last Vietnamese exited. Some rifle fire was heard, but what happened is a mystery. But, attempts to break in diminished.⁴⁶

In the meantime, the NVA were trucking out their dead and wounded as a stay behind element secured the camp. 1LT Thomas E. Todd, an Army engineer from Da Nang, who had been sent to assess the old Lang Vei

airstrip, watched the activities from under a building. He saw PT-76s towing damaged, but reparable tanks away as the artillery-mauled infantry units withdrew. They 'vanished' into the Laotian jungle, covered by another fog-shrouded morning that delayed airstrikes and aerial-directed artillery.⁴⁷

The Aftermath

By mid-morning, SFC Ashley had marshalled about fifteen volunteers from the Laotian military. In between leading five ground assaults, the SF sergeant talked with Marine artillery men and Air Force forward air controllers (FACs) to open an escape route for the Americans trapped in the ops bunker. Though SFC Ashley would be mortally wounded during his fifth attack, the continuous air strikes pinned down the enemy sufficiently to allow the survivors to escape to old Lang Vei.⁴⁹



SFC Eugene Ashley, Jr. was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for his valorous actions above and beyond the call of duty on 7 February 1968.

Who Was Left in the Ops Bunker?

CPT Frank C. Willoughby, CO, Det A-101

1LT Paul R. Longgear, CO, Det A-113 & 12 Company, I MSF

SSG Arthur S. Brooks, Det A-101

SSG Emanuel E. Phillips, Det A-101

SGT John D. Early, Det A-113 & 12 Company, I MSF⁵²

SGT Nickolas Fragos, Det A-101

SP4 Franklin H. Dooms, Det A-101

SP4 James L. Moreland, Det A-113 & 12 Company, I MSF⁵³



COVEYS & SUPER SPADS

The 20th Tactical Air Support Squadron (TASS), 7th U.S. Air Force, was based at Da Nang Airbase in South Vietnam. The forward air controllers (FACs), all seasoned Air Force pilots, flew dual-engine Cessna O-2A *Skymasters* fitted with two seven-round rocket pods containing fourteen 2.75 inch white phosphorous rockets to mark targets. Captain (Capt.) Charles P. ‘Toby’ Rushforth, III, the COVEY FAC (252) awaiting ‘hand off’ responsibility for Lang Vei on 7 February 1968, watched COVEY 688, ‘daisy chain’- led two A-1J *Skyraiders* (CANASTA Flight, VA-25, LCDR Rosario ‘Zip’ Rausa and LTJG Larry Gardiner) down through a ‘sucker hole’ in the clouds, to attack the NVA surrounding the ops bunker. “It was a ‘free-for-all,’ ripping through the treetops, in and out of the cloud bases and ground fog, pulling high G-turns, firing away and somehow not hitting each other as they strafed the bunker...the A-1 guys were all balls!” said Capt. Rushforth. “I took pictures of the camp with my *Nikon* telephoto camera and (photographed) got the two tanks knocked out along the road and the one alongside the ops bunker. We had to keep them away from the TOC (tactical operations center) until help arrived.”⁴⁸

Flying a Cessna O-24 *Skymaster* (above), Capt. Rushforth, the second COVEY over Lang Vei on 7 February 1968, directed U.S. Navy A-1J *Skyraiders* (‘Super Spads’) against NVA forces occupying the SF camp.

A heavily armed A-1J *Skyraider* (VA-25) ready to launch from the U.S.S. *Coral Sea*.



While stay-behind NVA infantry were taking shelter in the CIDG trenches during the steady stream of air-strikes, 1LT Longgear, the MSF company commander, exited the bunker and began pulling and dragging the others out. He instructed them, “If anyone gets hit and falls down, leave him. Keep moving towards old Lang Vei.” Then, the MSF lieutenant became the last man. The body of SP4 James L. Moreland was left behind. 50 Marine CH-46D *Sea Knight* helicopters carrying a relief force were reportedly approaching. As he trailed the group 1LT Longgear spotted two NVA soldiers at a machinegun position and engaged them with his CAR-15 rifle. When his weapon jammed after three shots, a grenade blast knocked him down, leaving him breathless as he watched his comrades moving away. Miraculously, the stunned MSF company commander staggered back to his feet and hobbled after them on a shrapnel-riddled ankle.⁵¹

Old Lang Vei was in pandemonium. The Laotians panicked when they realized that the American SF was leaving. “When I asked LTC Schungel what was going on, he just pointed towards a *Huey* overhead and said, ‘Get out on the LZ (under mortar and heavy machine-gun fire) and pop this smoke grenade.’ I took the grenade and crawled out with my screwed up ankle and did just that. The smoke covered my retreat. By the time I managed to get over to the idling *Huey* it had been swarmed by Laotians. I beat my way through the throng of humanity with my CAR-15, then manhandled several Laotians off the helicopter, clambered aboard (LTC Schungel and MSG Craig were already sitting inside), and then I had to pummel hands and arms to clear the skids and support elbows so the pilot could lift the overloaded helicopter off. Miraculously our aircraft was not fired on,” said 1LT Longgear.⁵⁹

“Mr. Lake dipped the nose and we lifted off. As we struggled to lift off I discovered a Laotian hanging on my skid. I pummeled his hands until he finally let go about 12 feet off the ground. He fell into a local thatched hootch. It was a struggle to clear the trees before we broke clear. No one reported any enemy fire. The terrain masked us from the NVA in the other camp,” related SP4 Cyrus, the starboard M-60 machine gunner. “It was after the medevac mission, going home, that NVA near Hue fired us up.”⁶⁰ Not all U.S. personnel who survived the Lang Vei attack were that lucky.

Personnel accountability had been lost when the battle started; 1LT Todd, a combat engineer sent to survey the old Lang Vei airstrip, was forgotten in the melee and left behind when the ops bunker survivors escaped. When he saw the UH-1 *Huey* landing at old Lang Vei (*Minuteman* 082), he broke cover and ran hell bent towards the camp. He missed the *Huey*, but was



Minutemen to the Rescue!

“On 7 February 1968, the 176th Assault Helicopter Company, was rotating two ‘slicks’ and two ‘guns’ (UH-1C ‘Hog’ gunships) every two weeks to support the Hue/Phu Bai Special Forces camp. The Tet Offensive was going ‘full bore.’ Hue had fallen. We were flying supplies and ammunition. Early that afternoon, we (a two ‘slick’ mission) were directed to Khe Sanh to do a medical evacuation (medevac) at Lang Vei. The landing zone (LZ) was reported to be a ‘single ship’ one so my wingman, Warrant Officer One (WO1) Lowell Tucker, stayed above,” related former WO1 Robert C. ‘Bob’ Hartley.⁵⁴ “Refueling at Khe Sanh between mortar and artillery fire had been a bugger. We broke off fueling three times to zigzag hover away before finally ‘topping off,’” said former artillery Specialist Fourth Class (SP4) Raymond E. ‘Ray’ Cyrus, the star-board door gunner.⁵⁵ “During the refueling two SF soldiers from Command and Control, North (CCN), MACV-Studies and Observation Group (SOG), ‘bummed a ride’ into old Lang Vei,” stated COL (then 1LT) Paul Longgear.⁵⁶

“Every day was on-the-job training (OJT), so I was getting my Aircraft Commander (AC) check ride as pilot while my co-pilot, another WO1, Thomas Lake, served as AC. I saw mortar rounds hitting near the LZ as I flew over the Special Forces (SF) camp checking things out. We had no communications (comms) with the SF on the ground, but smoke was finally popped as I came in on final,” said WO1 Hartley.⁵⁷

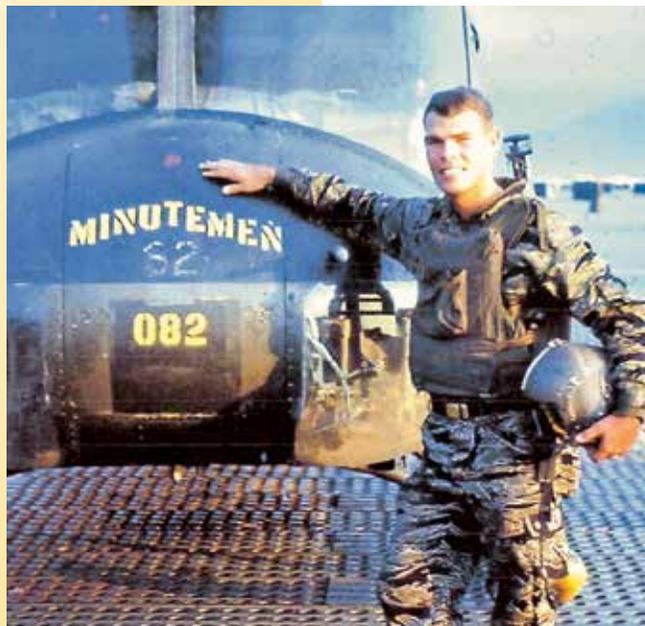
“As starboard M-60 door gunner, I spotted two disabled tanks; one still smoldering as we flew over Lang Vei. The air reeked of burnt cordite from the airstrikes. When we landed, the aircraft was mobbed by indigenous troops, some with M-16s, others with AK-47s, intent on scrambling aboard. I didn’t know who was who. There was total chaos. An unconscious wounded American was pulled off the helicopter. Then, wsome SF guys began throwing indigenous troops off so they could get the wounded on board,” remembered former SP4 Ray Cyrus. “It was crazy. Nobody knew who we were because there were no unit markings or nose art on our *Huey*.”⁵⁸

rescued by the SF relief force and flown out on a Marine CH-46B *Sea Knight* helicopter (HMM 262).⁶¹

Ironically, SSG Dennis L. Thompson, a communications sergeant, Det A-113 and 12 Company, I MSF emerged from hiding with his PRC-25 radio just as the two Marine *Sea Knights* were lifting off, besieged by Laotians trying to escape. He called the COVEY FAC (255), CPT Anthony Sazanovich, who was still overhead orchestrating the rescue mission in conjunction with the airstrikes. COVEY 255 radioed the Marine helicopter force (two CH-46 *Sea Knight* transport and two UH-1E *Huey* gunship helicopters) that an SF soldier was left behind at old Lang Vei. One of the *Huey* gunships which had fire supported the CH-46s, volunteered to return. They had sufficient fuel to rescue SSG Thompson. Unfortunately, their valiant effort proved unsuccessful. SSG Thompson was captured and recaptured after escaping twice before arriving at the ‘Hanoi Hilton.’ He was repatriated in the spring of 1973.⁶² See sidebar for details on the daring rescue attempt.

So, what came out of this frontier battle? SF border camps served a purpose. The Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) knew their vulnerability and accepted the risk. Because rescue was problematic, the camps were necessary, but expendable. All 27 Americans at the two Lang Vei SF camps were wounded (17), missing or killed/presumed dead (6), or status unknown (later 4 prisoners of war [POWs]). Since the Americans lost situational awareness and personnel accountability in the darkness on 7 February 1968. What the indigenous troops did is illusory; only thirty-three MSF ‘strikers’ were listed as missing in action (MIA) on 4 March 1968; CIDG records were cursory.⁶⁵

Lang Vei was another pyrrhic Communist victory during the Tet Offensive because the NVA and VC suffered major losses. The Lang Vei SF camp defenders and the subsequent ten hours of airstrikes and artillery on the SF camp deterred a major direct assault on the Marine base at Khe Sanh. This upset NVA intentions to



SP4 Raymond E. Cyrus, UH-1B *Iroquois* ‘Huey’ door gunner, 176th Assault Helicopter Company, 14th Combat Aviation Battalion, was aboard *Minuteman* 082, diverted to Lang Vei on 7 February 1968, for a MEDEVAC mission.

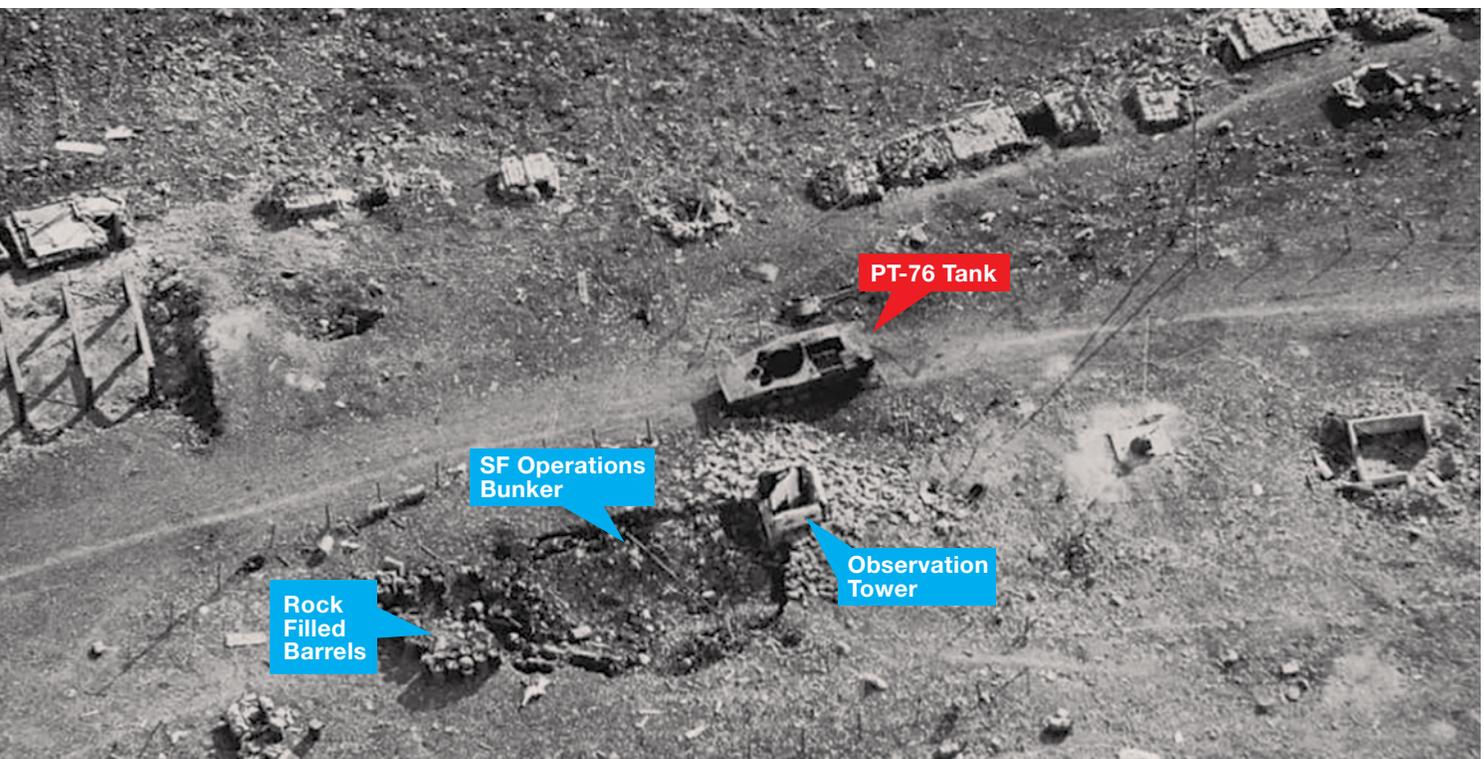


The Aftermath // Clockwise from top-left

First Lieutenant (1LT) Paul R. Longgrear, the Mobile Strike Force (MSF) company commander at Lang Vei, is helped to the Marine Aid Station at Khe Sanh Combat Base, 7 February 1968.

1st Cavalry Division troops gawk at knocked out PT-76 tank at Lang Vei in May 1968

Photo of Detachment A-101 operations bunker after the 7 February 1968 battle. Note the one PT-76 tank left behind, the rock-filled 55-gallon barrels (LAW firing positions left of the bunker crater, and the remnants of the ops bunker tower on right corner. After the Americans escaped NVA engineers filled the bunker with explosives and detonated them; hence the large crater.



control the northern provinces of Quang Tri and Thua Thien as well as the DMZ.⁶⁶ Despite not being highlighted in the official account, *Vietnam Studies: U.S. Army Special Forces 1961-1971* (2004), the battle of Lang Vei on 7 February 1968 demonstrated both the value and the vulnerability of SF border camps and the consequences of underestimating NVA capacity and capabilities.⁶⁷

Relevance Today

The countrywide Communist offensive during Tet in 1968 targeted almost every city in South Vietnam. Despite the U.S. military winning all the major battles, America's war to stop the spread of Communism in South Vietnam suddenly became headline news in all media. The sounds and vivid scenes of street fighting were heard and seen on televisions across America.

Like the tanks at Lang Vei, the 'in your face' television broadcasts shocked everyone, making small town Americans acutely aware of wartime casualties. The subsequent national antiwar and anti-establishment movements led to a major U.S. national strategy change and significantly contributed to democratic South Vietnam being conquered by the North in 1975. Though the number of casualties in the eighteen years of war since 9/11 is not on the scale of Vietnam, this war has become our longest. Faltering political will and adverse popular opinion, can again cause national strategy and policy changes.

Post Script

The SF border camp at Lang Vei was not reestablished. General (GEN) Creighton W. Abrams Jr., who succeeded GEN William C. Westmoreland as Commander, MACV (10 June 1968), closed the Khe Sanh Marine Base on 5 July 1968.⁷⁷ Lang Vei in conjunction with the Tet Offensive preceded a major change in American national strategy in South Vietnam...from leading the counterinsurgency war against internal Communism to supporting on a significantly reduced scale. Tragically, that strategic policy shift complemented a North Vietnamese decision to conquer the democratic South and unify the country under Communism.⁷⁸ 🇺🇸

Special Thanks

To retired COL Paul R. Longgrear (12 Company, I MSF), retired Colonel Charles P. 'Toby' Rushforth III (COVEY 252, 20th TASS, 7th U.S. Air Force), former Navy LT Jay Stone (Intelligence Officer, VA-25, *USS Coral Sea*), former CW2 Robert C. Hartley and former SP4 Raymond E. 'Ray' Cyrus (176th Assault Aviation Company), and Mr. James B. Dickey (Associate Director, *IHS-Janes*).

LANG VEI: FOUR MAJOR FAILURES

1. Leadership

- Despite a lack of field combat experience in Vietnam, LTC Schungel usurped chain of command before and during the battle until he chose to escape. Then, safe in old Lang Vei, LTC Schungel took charge again.⁶⁸
- The lack of American SF presence caused the CIDG and MSF to abandon the fight.⁶⁹
- Personnel accountability (American, Vietnamese, and indigenous) was lost after the battle began; of the two survivors left behind, one was rescued and the other captured.⁷⁰

2. Intelligence

- Despite MACV J2 denials, fifty amphibious PT-76 tanks and fifty BTR-50 armored personnel carriers were delivered to North Vietnam during 1965;⁷¹ Warnings of an imminent attack from NVA defectors were not taken seriously.⁷²

3. Training

- Defensive actions were not rehearsed; a need for escape plans was ignored. "Nobody considered the possibility of being overrun," commented retired COL Longgrear.⁷³
- The minimum arming distance for the M-72 LAW 66 mm rocket (33 feet) was not emphasized; hence, most LAW rockets did not explode.⁷⁴
- Despite reports of enemy tanks on the Ho Chi Minh trail, no field expedient counter measures were prepared—making Molotov cocktails, fougasse flame barrels, or tank traps.⁷⁵

4. Security

- Alert conditions were not heightened after an armed NVA defector walked past the sleeping Bru gate guards and into the SF team house to warn of an imminent attack.⁷⁶

Sheer Guts Was Not Enough



SEAWORTHY 421, piloted by CPT Edward Kufeldt and co-pilot 2LT George Rosenthal (VMO 6), suggested that COVEY 255 use the two A-26 *Invader* light attack bombers to hit both sides of the airstrip with bombs to suppress the NVA. "I intended to make a high-speed run, flare to bleed off airspeed and get in quick," recalled CPT Kufeldt. "As we rolled out on final, I saw a file of NVA, ten to twelve, in a gully...at least a quarter mile away, far enough that I thought we could get in and out before they were a threat," recounted 2LT Rosenthal. "As Kufeldt flared to land from a high hover, I looked through the chin bubble and saw an NVA directly below me on one knee. He opened fire and stitched us with his AK-47!"⁶³

The Marine lieutenant was hit in both legs and an arm. An artery was severed in his arm. Several other enemy soldiers, just yards away, were blazing away with rifles and automatic weapons. Corporal (CPL) Robert Crutcher, the crew chief, said, "I felt like my head was in a popcorn popper as the bullets cracked by. I was sitting on my steel pot when a round came through it into my leg." "Then, the instrument panel lit up like a Christmas tree. Almost all the caution lights were solid yellow. When the engine fire light came on red, the engine coughed. I struggled for control and managed to get airborne. My co-pilot, slumped down in his seat, looked dead. I got the badly vibrating aircraft airborne and headed straight for Khe Sanh. There LT Rosenthal was stabilized and later evacuated to the States. Our helicopter was 'non-flyable.' It looked like a sieve with more than eighty bullet holes. CPL Crutcher and I were treated and returned to duty," commented CPT Kufeldt.⁶⁴ SSG Thompson was captured and marched away. He was repatriated from the 'Hanoi Hilton' in the spring of 1973 during Operation HOMECOMING.

Endnotes

- 1 "Vietnam War Commemoration: Home Page" at <https://www.vietnamwar50th.com/> accessed 29 May 2019. By Presidential Proclamation, the U.S.A. Vietnam War Commemoration will continue through Veterans Day, November 11, 2025 at https://www.vietnamwar50th.com/about/about-national_vietnam_war_veterans_day/ accessed 5/29/2019.
- 2 Retired COL Paul R. Longgrear, interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 27 August 2018, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter cited by name and date. *The NVA usually broke contact when 'Mobile Strike Force' patrols encountered them. In 'hot pursuit' of the enemy*

one MSF element discovered a large vehicle bridge just below the surface of the Se Pone River, the border between Laos and South Vietnam. Hidden from the air the bridge was engineered by professionals. Numerous crossing sites on the Se Pone were confirmed by the CIA in January 1966. Central Intelligence Agency, RDP80T01471R001400040009-5, River Crossing, Route 9, Sepone Area, Laos 1641N 10613E, 21 January 1966, declassified 12 February 2008.

- 3 Department of the Army. Company C, 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), APO San Francisco 96337. SUBJECT: After Action Report Battle of Lang Vei, 22 February 1968, 2, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter cited as AAR Battle of Lang Vei.
- 4 COL Francis J. Kelly, *Vietnam Studies: U.S. Army Special Forces, 1961-1971* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1973), 83.
- 5 AAR Battle of Lang Vei, 2.
- 6 David B. Stockwell, *Route 9 Problem: The Battle for Lang Vei* (Bothell, WA: Book Publishers Network, 2017), 40-42.
- 7 William R. Phillips, *Night of the Silver Stars: The Battle of Lang Vei* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1997), 23-24; Stockwell, *Tanks in the Wire: The First Use of Enemy Armor in Vietnam* (Canton, OH: Daring Books, 1989), 39.
- 8 Phillips, *Night of the Silver Stars*, 15-17.
- 9 Stockwell, *Tanks in the Wire*, 33.



Army SF Thanks: VA-25 Skyraider Pilots of 7 February 1968

Cdr Stu Skelton, VA-25 Cdr
LT Bruce Marcus
Cdr Cliff Church, VA-25 XO
LT Al Nichols
LCdr Rosario 'Zip' Rausa
LT Jack Jordan
LCdr 'Speed' Ritzmann
LTJG Larry Gardiner
LCdr Ron Bolt
LTJG Dale Pellot
LCdr Ralph Smith
LTJG Ted Hill
LT Chuck Thom
Ens Bob Hagan



- 10 Stockwell, *Route 9 Problem*, 40-43; Phillips, *Night of the Silver Stars*, ix-x, 10-12.
- 11 Stockwell, *Route 9 Problem*, 43; Phillips, *Night of the Silver Stars*, 12-13.
- 12 The Vietnamese CIDG companies, manned by irregular volunteers, were essentially paramilitary forces. Gordon L. Rottman, *Mobile Strike Forces in Vietnam, 1966-70* (London, Osprey Publishing, 2007), 10.
- 13 U.S. Naval Mobile Construction Battalion Eleven (USNMCB 11), FPO San Francisco 96601. Deployment Completion Report, 12 March 1968, hereafter cited as USNMCB 11, Deployment Report, 12 March 1968.
- 14 Longgrear interview, 27 August 2018; William T. Craig, *Team Sergeant: A Special Forces NCO at Lang Vei and Beyond* (New York; Ballantine Publishing, 1998), 85, 135; Recruiting was problematic because in January 1967, U.S. Air Force F-4 Phantom fighter bombers mistakenly attacked the Bru hamlet at Lang Vei with cluster bombs and high explosives. Over a hundred tribesmen were killed and hundreds more wounded. That disaster severely impacted on CIDG recruiting. Phillips, *Night of the Silver Stars*, 10. Twice during the new Lang Vei base camp construction, a North Vietnamese biplane, a Soviet Antonov An-2 Colt, flew over and dropped 82mm mortar rounds. None exploded. ODA 101 personnel simply laughed at the comic efforts. Phillips, *Night of the Silver Stars*, 25; "Antonov An-2 (Colt): Single-Engine Biplane Utility Aircraft" at https://www.militaryfactory.com/aircraft/detail.asp?aircraft_id=754 accessed 22 March 2019. During the Korean War, the North Korean Air Force used Soviet WWII-era biplanes to attack fuel and ammo storage dumps and parked aircraft at night in South Korea. American soldiers referred to the night intruders as 'Bed Check Charlies.' Powered by large exposed radial engines and built mostly of wood, the low flying planes were difficult to spot on radar, too slow to intercept with jet aircraft, and noisy enough to harass ground troops. After an F-86 Sabrejet, several F-51 Mustangs, 15 million gallons of aviation fuel, and twenty tons of munitions were destroyed at Inch'on, several all-weather WWII-era propeller night fighters (F4U-5N Corsairs) from the USS Princeton (CVA-37) were stationed ashore to intercept the North Korean intruders. Lieutenant Guy Pierre Bordelon Jr. became the 'first propeller' ace of the war earning two Silver Stars and the Navy Cross. "Navy Pilot comes up Aces during the Korean War" at <https://usnhistory.navylive.dodlive.mil/2014/07/17/people-matter-navy-pilot-comes-up> accessed 22 March 2019; Briscoe, "Volunteering for Combat: Loudspeaker Psywar in Korea," *Veritas*, 1:2, 61. Interestingly, on 12 January 1968, an Air America UH-1D Huey helicopter shot down one of two An-2 Colts that attacked Lima Site 85, a radar station in Laos on the North Vietnamese border. The precision bomb scoring radar allowed Operation ROLLING THUNDER B-52 Stratofortress night and bad weather bomber strikes against North Vietnamese targets. It was the first CIA air-to-air victory and the only aircraft kill achieved by a helicopter. "An Air Combat First" at <https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/csi> accessed 22 March 2019; "The Incredible Story of the Air America UH-1D Huey that Shot Down a North Vietnamese AN-2 Colt Airplane" at <https://theaviationgeekclub.com/incredible-story-air-america-uh-1d-huey-short-north-vietnamese> accessed 22 March 2019.
- 15 Longgrear interviews, 27 August and 11 September 2018. The I Corps Mobile Strike Force, was commonly called a 'Mike Force' after its creator, Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Major (MAJ) Miguel 'Mike' de la Peña, a WWII and Korean War veteran. The MSF was predominantly Rhade Montagnards (from Darlac Province) with a smattering of Hré and Jarai. Miguel de la Peña interview by Rajesh Reddy, 25 October 2003, Voces Oral History Project, University of Texas at Austin at <https://voces.lib.utexas.edu/collections/stories/miguel-de-la-pe%C3%B1a> accessed 6 March 2019; Craig, *Team Sergeant*, 139, 137.
- 16 Longgrear interview, 27 August 2018; Craig, *Team Sergeant*, 86, 141.
- 17 Longgrear interviews, 5 and 20 September and 4 October 2018; Phillips, *Night of the Silver Stars*, 25 and book center photo/schematic section.
- 18 Longgrear interviews, 27 August, 11 September, and 4 October 2018; Phillips, *Night of the Silver Stars*, 25-26.
- 19 USNMCB 11, Deployment Report, 12 March 1968; Craig, *Team Sergeant*, 106.
- 20 Longgrear interview, 27 August 2018; Stockwell, *Route 9 Problem*, 68.
- 21 Jack Shulimson, LTC Leonard A. Baisol, Charles R. Smith, and CPT David A. Dawson, *The U.S. Marines in Vietnam: The Defining Year 1968* (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1997), 537.
- 22 Stockwell, *Route 9 Problem*, 51.
- 23 Craig, *Team Sergeant*, 150.
- 24 AAR Battle of Lang Vei, 30; Stockwell, *Route 9 Problem*, 63-65; CPT Willoughby was in Hawaii on R&R (Rest and Recreation) when the 33rd Royal Laotian Elephant Battalion arrived. Their pachyderms had been stolen months earlier by the Khmer Rouge and NVA. 1LT Miles Wilkins, the Detachment A-101 Executive Officer, and SFC William T. Craig, the team sergeant, monitored the NVA attack on Khe Sanh village on the radio. Craig, having received several reports of tanks in the area, gave the SF split team at old Lang Vei his only 57 mm recoilless rifle and 3.5 inch rocket launcher for antitank protection. When CPT Willoughby returned about a week before the 6-7 February attack, he was skeptical about a tank threat, despite the escalation of Bru CIDG desertions after the tank stories swept their ranks. Willoughby changed his mind about the MSF and put two platoons into night defenses behind the CIDG companies. Longgrear interview, 27 August 2018; Craig, *Team Sergeant*, 150, 154, 155, 166.
- 25 AAR Battle of Lang Vei, 1; Longgrear interview, 27 August 2018; Stockwell, *Route 9 Problem*, 49, 57, 67-68.
- 26 Phillips, *Night of the Silver Stars*, 68-69.
- 27 Longgrear interviews, 27 August and 5 September 2018; Phillips, *Night of the Silver Stars*, 68-69; Stockwell, *Route 9 Problem*, 51.
- 28 Longgrear, 11 September 2018.
- 29 Phillips, *Night of the Silver Stars*, 67; Stockwell, *Route 9 Problem*, 81; Longgrear interview, 20 September 2018.
- 30 Longgrear, 11 September 2018.
- 31 AAR Battle of Lang Vei, 6; Craig, *Team Sergeant*, 142-143, 163.
- 32 At their height the Bru Montagnard companies were at 50% strength. Stockwell, *Tanks in the Wire*, 74; Craig, *Team Sergeant*, 155-156.
- 33 Craig, *Team Sergeant*, 154, 171.
- 34 Stockwell, *Tanks in the Wire*, 76-78, 117; Craig, *Team Sergeant*, 136, 170-171; Longgrear interviews, 5 and 11 September 2018.
- 35 AAR Battle of Lang Vei, 4; Stockwell, *Tanks in the Wire*, 129; Stockwell, *Route 9 Problem*, 102-104, 111-112. The 3rd and 9th PT-76 Companies, 198th Tank Battalion, 203rd Armored Regiment had each lost two tanks coming south. Both had eight PT-76 tanks when the battle for Lang Vei started on 7 February 1968.
- 36 Stockwell, *Tanks in the Wire*, ix; Phillips, *Night of the Silver Stars*, xi; Craig, *Team Sergeant*, 172.
- 37 Stockwell, *Tanks in the Wire*, 123.
- 38 AAR Battle of Lang Vei, 3. Statement of CPT Frank C. Willoughby; Longgrear interviews, 5 and 11 September 2018; Phillips, *Night of the Silver Stars*, 85; Craig, *Team Sergeant*, 173, 175; Stockwell, *Tanks in the Wire*, 127; Stockwell, *Route 9 Problem*, 153.
- 39 AAR Battle of Lang Vei, 3. Statement of CPT Frank C. Willoughby; Longgrear interviews, 5, 11, and 20 September 2018; Phillips, *Night of the Silver Stars*, 85; Craig, *Team Sergeant*, 173, 175; Stockwell, *Tanks in the Wire*, 127; Stockwell, *Route 9 Problem*, 153.
- 40 Longgrear interview, 20 September 2018; Stockwell, *Route 9 Problem*, 112.
- 41 Longgrear interview, 20 September 2018; Phillips, *Night of the Silver Stars*, 89; Stockwell, *Tanks in the Wire*, 131; "Tank Encyclopedia: PT-76" at http://www.tanks-encyclopedia.com/coldwar/USSR/Soviet_PT-76.php accessed 30 May 2019.
- 42 Longgrear interview, 11 September 2018.
- 43 Stockwell, *Route 9 Problem*, 159; Phillips, *Night of the Silver Stars*, 90; Stockwell, *Tanks in the Wire*, 130.
- 44 Stockwell, *Route 9 Problem*, 159; Phillips, *Night of the Silver Stars*, 95, 97-98;
- 45 Stockwell, *Tanks in the Wire*, 131-132. Specialist Four (SP4) John A. Young, an SF weapons specialist, was captured by the NVA in Khe Sanh village on 26 January 1968. The accompanying Laotian soldiers fled. Phillips, *Night of the Silver Stars*, 68-69.
- 46 Longgrear interviews, 11 and 20 September 2018; Stockwell, *Route 9 Problem*, 162.
- 47 AAR Battle of Lang Vei, 2. Engineer 1LT Thomas E. Todd had accompanied LTC Schungel to survey the old Lang Vei airstrip for necessary repairs. He was completely 'forgotten' by the other Americans during the attack.

- Separated and lost in the foray, he survived the night moving and hiding under different buildings. But, in the darkness LT Todd watched the NVA evacuate dead and wounded in trucks. The operational PT-76s tow-barred disabled tanks from the camp which explains the discrepancy in numbers reportedly 'killed' by the Americans. It was not until Todd saw a UH-1 Huey helicopter landing at old Lang Vei that he broke cover and took off for the helicopter LZ. 1LT Todd missed the Huey but was evacuated to Da Nang by the CCN relief force. AAR Battle of Lang Vei, 5, 13. Statements of CPT Frank C. Willoughby and 1LT Thomas E. Todd; Longgear interview, 20 September 2018.
- 48 Retired Air Force COL Charles P. 'Toby' Rushforth, III, "FAC Support 1968: Battle for Lang Vei – Khe Sanh Hill 641," February 1968, unpublished.
 - 49 AAR Battle of Lang Vei, 3; Longgear interview, 20 September 2018; Stockwell, *Tanks in the Wire*, 131-135; Phillips, *Night of the Silver Stars*, 99-105.
 - 50 Longgear interview, 20 September 2018. "Someone said, 'Since it's the lieutenant's idea, he ought to go first.' So, I did. Before leaving the bunker we buried our dog tags and ID cards," recalled retired COL Paul Longgear. "A Navy A-1H Skyraider flew by and 'waggled' his wings. He was so close that I saw the pilot (LCDR Ron Bolt, VA-25)."
 - 51 Longgear interview, 20 September 2018; Phillips, *Night of the Silver Stars*, 107-108; Stockwell, *Tanks in the Wire*, 135-137; Craig, *Team Sergeant*, 182-183. The South Vietnamese SF inside the operations center elected to surrender in the last hours of darkness. After they exited the front steel door, it was bolted shut by the Americans inside. Their fate is unknown. AAR Battle of Lang Vei, 5, 12. Statements of CPT Frank C. Willoughby and SSG Emanuel E. Phillips.
 - 52 Contrary to Phillips, *Night of the Silver Stars*, 155, SGT John D. Early escaped from the Det A-101 ops bunker on 7 February 1968. He was not missing in action (MIA) as purported by Phillips. Longgear interview, 20 September 2018.
 - 53 Longgear interview, 8 July 2019; Phillips, *Night of the Silver Stars*, 89.
 - 54 Former Chief Warrant Officer Two (CW2) Robert C. 'Bob' Hartley, interview by Briscoe, 12 June 2019, Fort Bragg, NC, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter cited by name and date.
 - 55 Former Specialist Fourth Class (SP4) Raymond E. 'Ray' Cyrus, interview by Briscoe, 10 June 2019, Fort Bragg, NC, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter cited by name and date; Cyrus, *A Broken Silence in Vietnam* (Denver, CO: Outskirts Press, 2016), Chapter 10.
 - 56 Longgear interview, 5 July 2019.
 - 57 Hartley interview, 12 June 2019; "The History of the 176th Aviation Company" at <https://museum.vhpa.org/companies/176ahc/HistOf176AHC.html> accessed 10 June 2019.
 - 58 Cyrus interviews, 10 June and 29 July 2019; Cyrus, *A Broken Silence in Vietnam*, Chapter 10.
 - 59 Longgear interviews, 20 and 25 September 2018 and 23 January 2019.
 - 60 Cyrus interview, 10 June 2019.
 - 61 AAR Battle of Lang Vei, 5, 12. Statement of 1LT Thomas E. Todd; Longgear interviews, 20 and 25 September 2018; LTC Gary W. Parker and MAJ Frank M. Batha, Jr., *A History of Marine Observation Squadron Six* (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1982), 45; "The Lang Vei Rescue Attempt" (15 July 2013) at <https://mca-marines.org/leatherneck/the-lang-vei-rescue-attempt/> accessed 8 July 2019; Rushforth, "FAC Support 1968: Battle for Lang Vei – Khe Sanh 641."
 - 62 Parker and Batha, *A History of Marine Observation Squadron Six*, 45; "The Lang Vei Rescue Attempt" at <https://mca-marines.org/leatherneck/the-lang-vei-rescue-attempt/> accessed 8 July 2019; Rushforth, "FAC Support 1968: Battle for Lang Vei – Khe Sanh 641"; Dennis Thompson, undated statement on Lang Vei, copy in USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC. Staff Sergeant (SSG) Dennis L. Thompson, Det A-113 and 12 Company, I MSF communications sergeant, was captured on 7 February 1968. After repatriation in the spring of 1973, Sergeant First Class (SFC) Thompson, returned to duty with the 7th SFG at Fort Bragg. He later retired as a Sergeant Major (SGM) in the 1st Ranger Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment.
 - 63 Parker and Batha, *A History of Marine Observation Squadron Six*, 45; "The Lang Vei Rescue Attempt" at <https://mca-marines.org/leatherneck/the-lang-vei-rescue-attempt/> accessed 8 July 2019; Rushforth, "FAC Support 1968: Battle for Lang Vei – Khe Sanh 641."
 - 64 "The Lang Vei Rescue Attempt" at <https://mca-marines.org/leatherneck/the-lang-vei-rescue-attempt/> accessed 8 July 2019; Parker and Batha, *A History of Marine Observation Squadron Six*, 45. CPT Edward Kufeldt was later awarded the Silver Star and CPL Robert Crutcher was awarded an Air Medal for Valor.
 - 65 I CTZ MOPSUM, 4 March 1968.
 - 66 AAR Battle of Lang Vei, 4; Stockwell, *Route 9 Problem*, 2. The remnants of 12 Company, I Corps Mobile Strike Force after Lang Vei were reorganized, re-outfitted, and designated 15 Company. As recruits filled the ranks retraining began. Airborne qualification followed. I CTZ MOPSUM, 4 March 1968.
 - 67 Kelly, *Vietnam Studies*, 83, 183.
 - 68 Craig, *Team Sergeant*, 170-171, 176, 183; Stockwell, *Tanks in the Wire*, 117; Longgear interviews, 5 and 11 September 2018 & 23 January and 7 February 2019. LTC Schungel countermanded CPT Willoughby's decision to withdraw the MSF platoon from the OP. Schungel told 1LT Longgear to take the platoon out over the objections of the MSF platoon sergeants. SFC Charles Lindewald, MSF, and SFC Kenneth Hanna, Det A-101, convinced the Hré to follow them back to the OP. The NVA quickly overran the OP with two PT-76 tanks and a company of infantry. The alternate gunner for the second 106 RR gunner in the Lang Vei SF Camp was SFC Lindewald, who was mortally wounded at the OP. The status of SFC Hanna was unknown. Both were MIA, presumed dead. "LTC Schungel was an SFC disguised as a LTC," said retired COL Longgear. Longgear interview, 23 January 2019.
 - 69 I CTZ MOPSUM, 29 February 1968, 9.
 - 70 Longgear interview, 11 September 2018; Phillips, *Night of the Silver Stars*, 70; Stockwell, *Tanks in the Wire*, 116.
 - 71 James B. T. Dickey, Associate Director, *IHS-Janes*, email to Dr. C.H. Briscoe, "SUBJECT: PT-76s in Vietnam," 1 February 2019, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter cited as Dickey email with date; *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Arms Transfers Database* at http://armstrade.sipri.org/arms_trade/trade_register.pjp accessed 1/29/2019.; Longgear interview, 7 February 2019. The Soviets and Chinese provided 'security assistance' equipment to other Communist countries and 'neutral' states just as the U.S. did for its allies. Stockwell, *Tanks in the Wire*, 179.
 - 72 Longgear interview, 11 September 2018.
 - 73 Longgear interview, 11 September 2018.
 - 74 Longgear interview, 23 January 2019; AAR Battle of Lang Vei, 6; Craig, *Team Sergeant*, 176.
 - 75 AAR Battle of Lang Vei, 4; After Lang Vei was overrun on 7 February 1968, all I CTZ MSF companies trained with 3.5 inch Rocket Launchers (RL), LAWs, and 57mm Anti-Tank (AT) weapons. Every MSF company was issued one 3.5 inch RL. MSF companies in static defense were authorized to employ AT mines. I CTZ MOPSUM, 29 February 1968, 9.
 - 76 Longgear interview, 11 September 2018; The 5th SFG policy that forbid mine use in SF camps with indigenous troops was not challenged despite American AT mines requiring 290 to 400 pounds to trigger detonation; most indigenous troops weighed less than 90 pounds. "The Bru CIDG gate guards were routinely asleep most mornings from daybreak until 0800. Perimeter security was rarely checked by the Det A-101 leadership, so nobody 'got jacked up' about the poor security," stated retired COL Paul Longgear. Longgear interview, 8 July 2019.
 - 77 Kelly, *Vietnam Studies: U.S. Army Special Forces, 1961-1971*, 183. Interestingly, Lang Vei SF camp being overrun by an NVA tank-infantry task force on 7 February 1968 was not mentioned; "Khe Sanh – History" at <https://www.history.com/topics/vietnam-war/battle-of-khesanh-1> accessed 4 June 2019.
 - 78 Longgear interview, 7 February 2019.