
VIETNAM

Upon return to the States our unit remained with the 1st Infantry Division and was stationed at Fort Riley, Kansas, where we went through a series of redesignations. Battery D, 5th Field Artillery Battalion became Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 1st Field Artillery Battalion, 5th Artillery on February 15, 1957. Our unit became a battalion-size element on April 20, 1960, when we were reorganized and redesignated as the 1st Rocket Howitzer Battalion, 5th Artillery. With this reorganization, the entire battalion could trace its lineage to Alexander Hamilton's Revolutionary War battery. The battalion was organized with a Headquarters Battery and two firing units. Battery A was equipped with four 8" howitzers and Battery B was equipped with two 762mm Honest John rocket launchers.

The battalion was again redesignated on January 20, 1964 as the 1st Battalion, 5th Artillery and was equipped with eighteen 105mm towed howitzers. This reorganization resulted in three firing batteries and a Headquarters and Service Battery. By direction of the Chief of Staff of the Army, the third firing battery was once more designated as Battery D in recognition of the many years that Battery D of the 5th Field Artillery had carried on the Alexander Hamilton Battery traditions.

In late 1965 the battalion was again called to fight for freedom as it deployed to Vietnam. On October 16, 1965 the battalion arrived in Vietnam, and first saw action in early November by providing fire support to 1st Brigade during a resupply convoy operation. A short time later the battalion supported two search and destroy missions with 1st Brigade. For our first few months in Vietnam, as part of a show of force to demonstrate the United States' commitment, we received the streamer embroidered
DEFENSE.

Army embarked on a counteroffensive in early 1966 to deter North Vietnamese Army forces from reaching the capitol city of Saigon. The campaign started slowly, allowing the battalion to help the civil action program by repairing and repainting a local Catholic church. As the battalion supported "Operation Rolling Stone" on February 12, the Viet Cong attempted to overrun the positions of Batteries B and D. After the fighting the battalion had four dead and 24 wounded, while 142 dead Viet Cong were on the perimeter. The streamer for this campaign is embroidered
COUNTEROFFENSIVE.

As the monsoon season of 1966 approached, the battalion supported the 1st Brigade in operations "Silver City", "Birmingham", "El Paso", and "Amarillo." The battalion

fired over 20,000 rounds and dealt a savage blow to the 272d Viet Cong regiment. We participated in small local area missions at the end of the year. In late April 1967, the battalion supported the 1st Brigade in "Operation Junction City", a larger operation than any of those previously conducted in Vietnam. For its operations from August 1, 1966 to April 30, 1967, by direction of the Secretary of the Army, the battalion received the Meritorious Unit Commendation embroidered VIETNAM 1966-1967. The summer contained relatively light action.

In late September "Operation Shenandoah II" began, and the 1st Infantry Division became heavily involved with a Viet Cong and a North Vietnamese regiment. During this operation the battalion again distinguished itself with quick, accurate, and heavy fires, helping destroy the enemy regiments. December found the battalion relocated at Quan Loi. For these 18 months, the battalion received campaign streamers inscribed COUNTEROFFENSIVE PHASE II and COUNTEROFFENSIVE PHASE III.

The Tet Offensive, the greatest North Vietnamese Army attack of the war, began on January 31, 1968. In this action, Battery D fired over 2,000 high explosive rounds into a village occupied by the Viet Cong and was credited with 300 kills. Throughout winter and spring the batteries operated from small firebases in support of 1st Brigade and Army of the Republic of Vietnam forces. During the summer the battalion supported operations, which caused heavy destruction of enemy forces and equipment. The streamer inscribed TET COUNTEROFFENSIVE commemorates our involvement in this action.

The actions of the next ten months would result in three streamers embroidered with the word COUNTEROFFENSIVE: one each for PHASE IV, PHASE V, and PHASE VI. The purpose of these phases was to push North Vietnamese Army forces out of South Vietnam. For distinguishing itself in support of military operations during the period May 1, 1967 to July 31, 1968, the unit received the Meritorious Unit Commendation (First Oak Leaf Cluster) embroidered VIETNAM 1967-1968. That year we also earned the Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Palm, inscribed VIETNAM 1965-1968.

"Operation Fishhook" began on October 18, 1968. During this operation Lieutenant Colonel Charles C. Rogers, the battalion commander, distinguished himself above and beyond the call of duty, becoming the first and only member of our unit to receive the Congressional Medal of Honor. At 0330 hours on November 1, 1968, the battalion headquarters and B Battery, positioned at Fire Support Base Rita, were hit by concentrated direct and indirect fires and attacked by North Vietnamese soldiers.

Colonel Rogers moved to the embattled area and aggressively rallied the dazed artillery crewmen to man their howitzers. Although knocked to the ground and wounded by an exploding round, Colonel Rogers sprang to his feet and led a small counterattack force against an enemy element that had penetrated the howitzer positions. Although painfully wounded a second time during the assault, he pressed

the attack. Refusing medical treatment Colonel Rogers reestablished and reinforced the defensive positions.

In a second and third enemy attack, Colonel Rogers continued to direct artillery fire and lead counterattacks, moving to each position and rallying the cannoneers. Seeing a howitzer inoperative due to casualties, he joined surviving section members to return the gun to action. While on this howitzer, Colonel Rogers was seriously wounded when a heavy mortar round exploded on the gun position parapet. Too severely wounded to physically lead the defense, Colonel Rogers continued to give encouragement and direction to his men. His leadership helped ensure that Fire Support Base Rita was not overrun.

The battalion began the year of 1969 at Lai Khe in direct support of the 1st Brigade, providing fires to break communist control of areas like the Trapezoid, Iron Triangle, and the Razorback. Our support during the 1969 Tet Offensive and the ensuing counteroffensive resulted in a streamer embroidered T'ET 69 / COUNTEROFFENSIVE. At times, the battalion controlled fires of up to nine other firing batteries. In "Operation Lightning", the 1st and 25th Division Artillery units brought havoc on enemy forces as they tried to flee from ground troops. The battalion received credit for 127 dead in this operation.

The battalion moved with 1st Brigade to Dau Tieng that summer, and during the second half of the year aided in destruction of some North Vietnamese Army recruitment units. The battalion ended the year by starting the "Progress Program" with the 8th Regiment of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam, preparing the soldiers and units from the Republic of Vietnam for their future fight. The streamer which covers this time period is marked SUMMER-FALL 1969, during which operations concentrated on training the Army of the Republic of Vietnam forces to replace United States forces as the main effort.

The battalion continued training various Republic of Vietnam units and provided a small amount of fire support to ground forces. The final streamer presented to our unit for service in Vietnam is embroidered WINTER-SPRING 1970. Marking the end of our combat duty in Vietnam, our unit received a second Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Palm, embroidered VIETNAM 1969-1970, and the Republic of Vietnam Civil Action Honor Medal, First Class, which was embroidered VIETNAM 1965-1970. The battalion returned to Fort Riley, Kansas, in April 1970.

In the years following Vietnam, the battalion remained at Fort Riley in direct support of the 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, and the unit was refitted with self-propelled 155mm howitzers. During these years, one brigade of the Division was forward-stationed in Germany to support the mission of defending Europe from attack by the Soviet Union. As part of that mission, the 1st Battalion, 5th Field Artillery frequently participated in REFORGER exercises, which involved deployment to the Federal

Republic of Germany for maneuvers. The United States Army also opened the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California, and rotations there provided a major training focus for our unit.

