



“We’re not in Kansas anymore”

The 41st Civil Affairs Company in Vietnam Part II



by Troy J. Sacquety

While conducting a Medical Civic Action Program (MEDCAP) in 1969 at the resettlement village of Edap Enang in the II Corps area of the Central Highlands, Civil Affairs (CA) medic Sergeant (SGT) David J. Forbes realized that something was odd. “I had a Vietnamese come in limping . . . blood dripping down his leg. I [could] see an entry wound but no exit . . . He said it happened out in the woods. But . . . I had to wonder what he was doing in a Jarai [one of the indigenous Montagnard tribes] village.” Despite the unusual circumstances, Forbes removed an American 5.56mm bullet, bandaged the wound, and gave his patient antibiotics. “I never asked questions . . . he had a buddy with him and the medics told me after they left that they were VC [Viet Cong]. Who knows? I always helped anyone in line.”¹ Forbes’ experience was not abnormal for 41st CA Company personnel in Vietnam.

This article, the second of two, examines the 41st from 1968 until it was disbanded in 1970.² Part I covered 1965 to 1967 and described the unit’s difficulties during that period: a lack of senior guidance; decentralized chain of command; lack of training; and unreliable logistics support. Those problems continued. What was significantly different was the impact of the 1968 Tet Offensive. Despite that, the 41st CA overcame the problems and succeeded in assisting the civilian population of South Vietnam. A brief review of Part I sets the stage for 41st operations in 1968.

Following an insurgency that led to the ouster of the French colonial government, the 1954 Geneva Accords divided Vietnam into a Communist North and an ostensibly

democratic U.S.-supported South. VC guerrillas in the South tried to unify all of Vietnam under Communist rule. By 1965 the South Vietnamese government teetered on collapse. The U.S. decided to commit conventional military forces to stabilize the situation. The Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) requested a Civil Affairs Company.³ The 41st CA Company was the first of three similar organizations assigned to Vietnam.⁴ At the time, the U.S. Army was embracing the concept of special warfare, of which Civil Affairs was a part.⁵

Army doctrine defined CA as the aspects “which embrace the relationship between the military forces and the civil authorities and people in a friendly or occupied area where military forces are present.”⁶ Army Field Manual 41-10 “Civil Affairs Operations” explained the CA role in unconventional (UW) and counter-guerrilla warfare. “CA operations are so conducted as to engender stable conditions which are unfavorable to guerrilla activities through the relief of local destitution, restoration of law and order, resumption of agricultural production, reestablishment of local government, and measures to enlist the active support and sympathy of the local population.”⁷

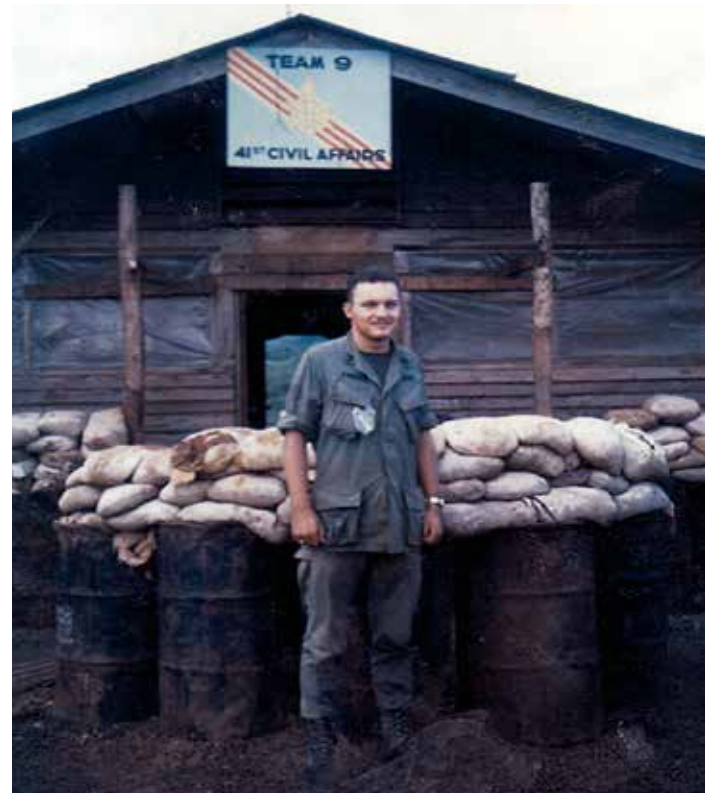
However, few in the Army knew what CA was and even fewer senior commanders knew how to properly employ a Civil Affairs unit. Despite repeated inquiries to the Department of the Army before deployment overseas, the only guidance given to the 41st was to help the local inhabitants and increase their faith in local and national authorities. Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Theodore Llana, Jr.,

In the Vietnam era, there was substantial confusion surrounding the terms ‘Civic Action’ and ‘Civil Affairs.’ Both terms concerned the interaction of military forces with civilian populations. However, while many U.S. military units conducted Civic Action, only Civil Affairs units performed the latter function. From period manuals, we get the following explanations:

Civic Action is defined as, “the use of preponderantly indigenous military forces on projects useful to the local population at all levels in such fields as education, training, public works, agriculture, transportation, communications, health, sanitation, and other areas contributing to economic and social development which would serve to improve the standing of the military forces with the population.” (*Dictionary of United States Military Terms for Joint Usage* – 1962, as cited in ST 41-10, *Civic Action Handbook*, Mar 1964)

Civil Affairs is defined as, “those phases of the activities of a commander which embrace the relationship between the military forces and the civil authorities and people in a friendly (including US home territory) or occupied area where military forces are present. In an occupied country or area this may include the exercise of executive, legislative, and judicial authority by the occupying power. (FM 41-10, *Civil Affairs Operations*, Dec 1961)

As can be imagined, there was considerable confusion over the terms. Therefore, many in the U.S. Army, including senior leaders, did not understand what Civil Affairs units brought to the table.



SGT David J. Forbes, a Civil Affairs medic, treated friend and foe alike during his time with the 41st CA Company.



SP5 Jerry Bisco of Team 15 provides dental care for villagers near Pleiku. Such medical care, to include treating residents at a local leper colony, was often the first modern medicine to which the villagers ever had access.

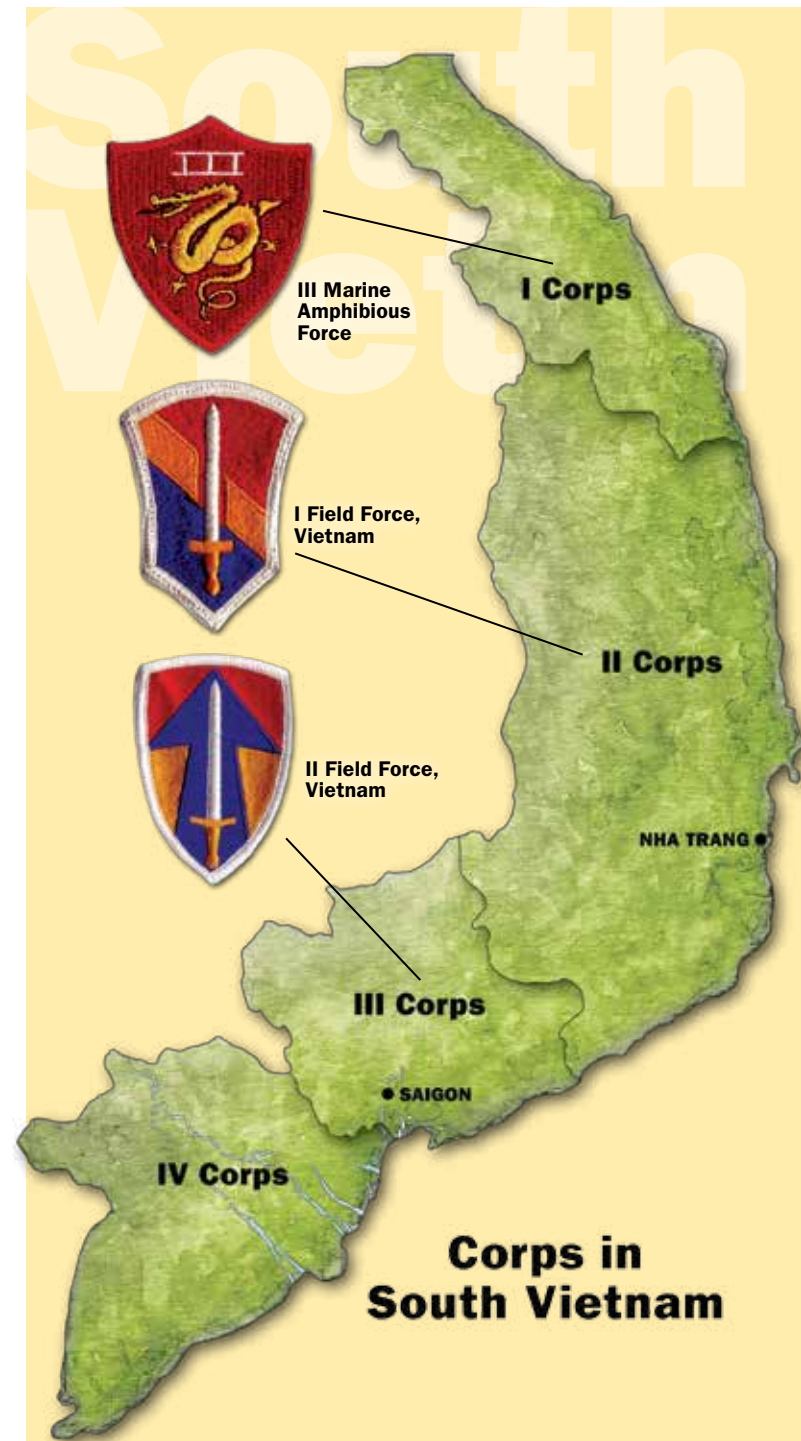


Some 41st CA Teams helped the locals build schools, such as this high school at Truong Hoc Vinh Hy. 1LT Earl C. Palmer said "Education is the most priceless thing that you can own in Vietnam. They have no trouble with high school drop-outs there."

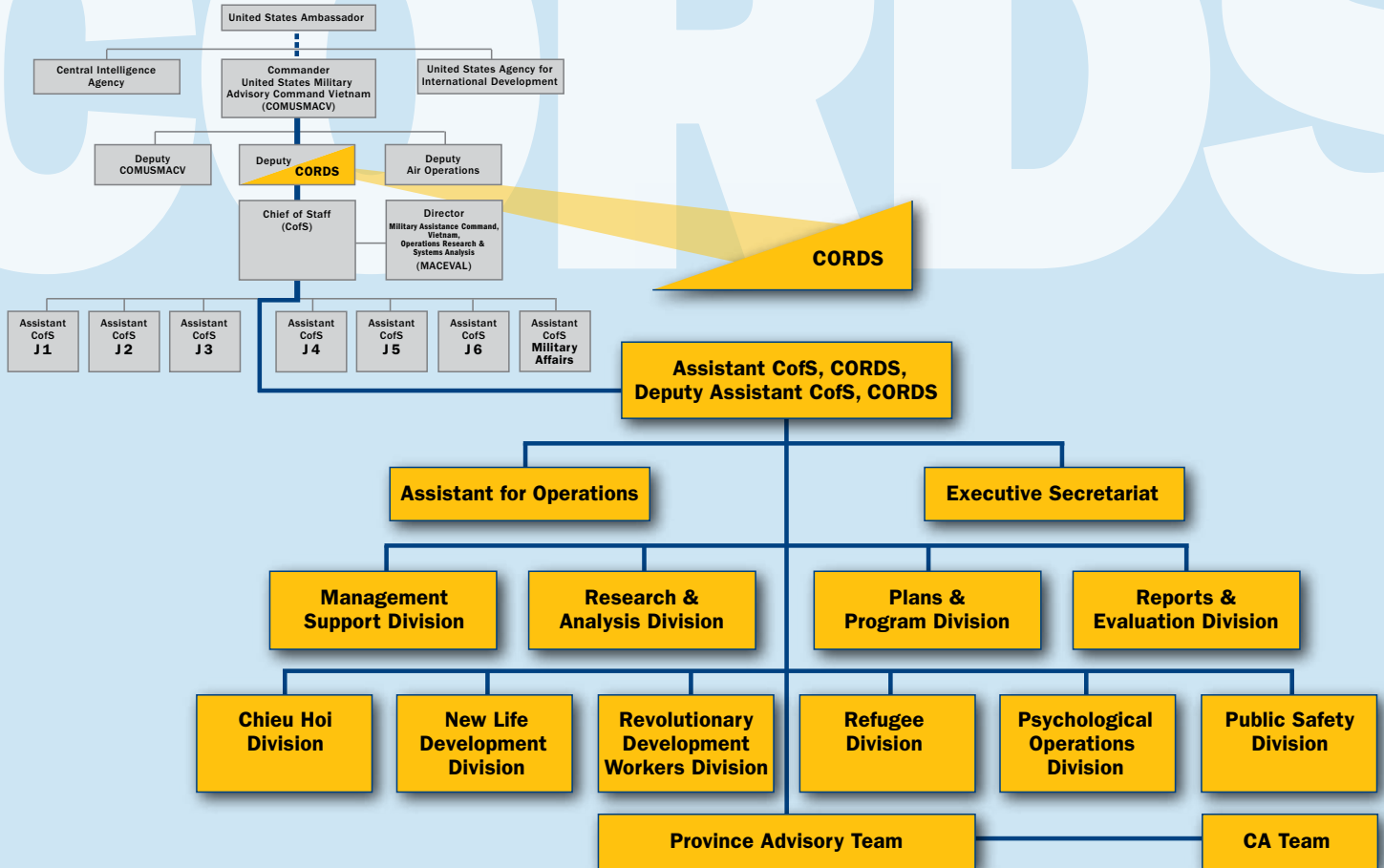
(November 1966-July 1967) said: "I would have liked to have gotten [clearer] direction."⁸ How MACV parceled out the 41st CA teams exacerbated LTC Llana's problems.

Headquartered at Nha Trang, the 41st CA Company had sixteen numbered teams consisting of five to six men each.⁹ Individual teams were under the operational control (OPCON) of U.S. Army and U.S. Marine combat units in three of South Vietnam's four Corps areas. The goal of the 41st was to raise local standards of living and to demonstrate the benefits of local and national government. They were supposed to help villagers with projects designed to build commerce opportunities and self-sufficiency. In the absence of guidance from the 41st CA Company or the units to whom they were OPCON, the teams established their own priorities based on the availability of materials, local interest, and resident skills. Their most popular projects were construction or repair of schools, medical dispensaries, bridges, roads, culverts, dams, spillways, fish ponds, and wells. Additional and constant projects included refugee assistance, MEDCAPs, which focused on medical and dental care, and agricultural and educational programs. Although a MACV asset, U.S. Army Civil Affairs were lumped under the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) program to build the rural population's trust in South Vietnam's government.

Established in May 1967, CORDS was to coordinate the U.S. civilian and military rural pacification activities sponsored by the Army, State Department, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the U.S. Information Agency (USIA). This hybrid command was composed of integrated civilian and military personnel at all levels. CORDS' directors, first, Ambassador Robert William 'Blowtorch Bob' Komer, and then future CIA director William E. Colby, held three-star general authority. CORDS set up advisory teams in all 44 provinces and the 250 districts of South Vietnam. The Army CA teams were to win the 'hearts and minds' of the rural South Vietnamese people. Since by 1968 its teams were primarily centered in II Corps, the 41st was the only CA asset available to CORDS in the First Field Force, Vietnam



Civil Operations & Revolutionary Development Support



CORDS was a novel, Vietnam-era experiment formed in May 1967 to coordinate U.S. civil and military rural pacification programs. It had a hybrid civil-military structure that integrated military and civilians in command at all levels. CORDS' civilian heads, such as Ambassador Robert William 'Blowtorch Bob' Komer and future Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) director William E. Colby, held the equivalent of three-star general rank and were one of three deputies directly reporting to the MACV commander. CORDS included all American agencies in South Vietnam dealing with overt pacification and civilian field operations including the State Department, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the U.S. Information Agency (USIA), and the CIA.

CORDS civilian/military advisory teams were dispatched throughout South Vietnam's 44 provinces and 250 districts. They had a two pronged approach: to help win the 'hearts and minds' of the rural South Vietnamese people and to pair intelligence collection with direct/covert action. U.S. Army Civil Affairs was part of the overt side of CORDS mission to garner rural population trust in South Vietnam's government.

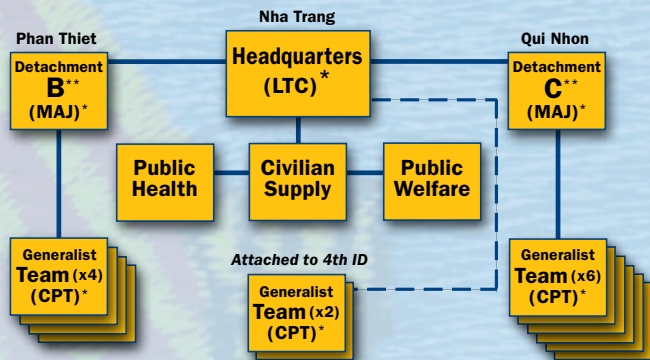
The U.S. Army originally made up the majority of CORDS personnel but the civilian presence grew as the war continued. In 1970, CORDS changed its name from 'Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support' to 'Civil Operations and Rural Development Support.' CORDS was a success, and Communist activity declined in the areas where it was fully implemented.

(IFFV).¹⁰ The 41st had just come under the general direction of CORDS when the Communists launched a massive offensive on Tet, the Vietnamese New Year holiday.

The Tet Offensive changed the American outlook on the Vietnam War. The well-coordinated country-wide assaults began on 30-31 January 1968. VC and North Vietnamese Army (NVA) units attacked more than 100 towns, cities, and military installations. Viet Cong hit the U.S. Embassy in Saigon while the NVA captured Hue, the traditional

capital of Vietnam. Although it proved to be a military disaster for the Communists, the startled media coverage of Tet provided the American public with the opposite reality. This gave the Communists an unintended strategic psychological victory. After repelling the NVA and VC forces, MACV directed U.S. Army Vietnam (USARV) to recapture the cities. The countryside was temporarily surrendered to the Communists. The Tet scare forced the 41st teams to adopt different *modi operandi*.

41st Civil Affairs Organization in II Corps, February 1968



(Teams 3, 5, 10, & 16 were assigned to the 29th Civil Affairs Company in I Corps and not directly under the 41st Civil Affairs Headquarters control.)

*Detachment designators B & C are names only and do not denote levels of command as in an SF group.

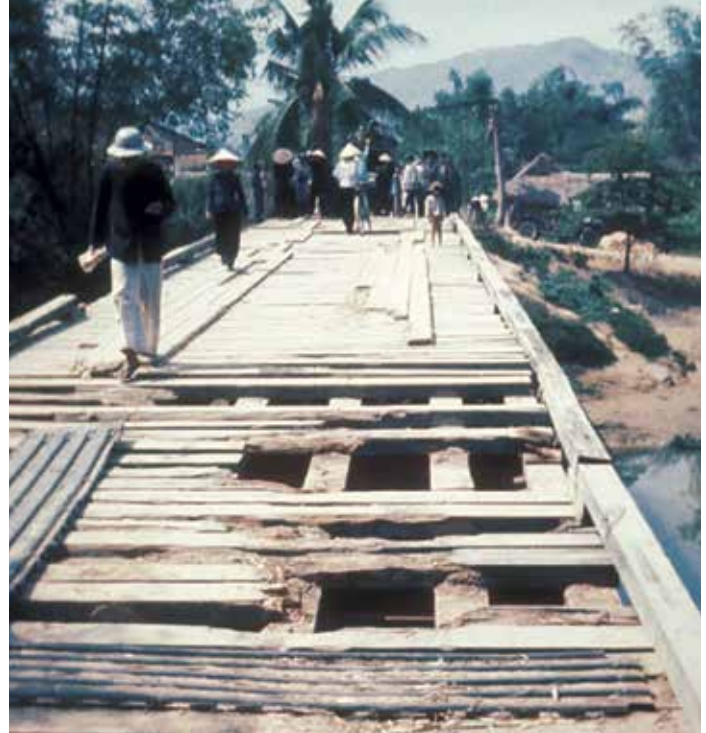
*Denotes rank commanded by.

Commanded by a Lieutenant Colonel (LTC), the 41st Civil Affairs Company was organized similarly to a Special Forces 'B' Team. From Company headquarters at Nha Trang, the commander monitored the geographically dispersed CA teams, and directed the centrally located Civilian Supply, Public Health, and Public Welfare Teams.¹ The sixteen generalist teams [platoons after 1968] can be likened to SF 'A' Teams and served primarily in Vietnam's rural areas.² The Company's TO&E authorized strength was 70 officers and 120 enlisted men with 73 vehicles. However, chronic personnel shortages were the norm.³ In 1969, a new TO&E reduced unit strength to reflect reality. Despite the paper reduction of teams, the company managed to keep its existing—and even additional *ad hoc* CA Teams—in the field by 'creative' personnel management.⁴

Although any team could be tailored to meet mission requirements, a TO&E CA Team consisted of six personnel—three officers and three enlisted men—each with a different specialty. 1LT Gary Faith explained: "41st CA Teams were supposed to have (1) Captain, Infantry as the CA Team Commander, (1) Lieutenant (LT), Military Intelligence, (1) LT, Engineer, (1) E-7 or E-6 Interpreter, (1) E-5 or E-4 Medic, and (1 or 2) E-4s with a specialty such as Agriculture, Military Police, Animal Husbandry, Intelligence or whatever the [team] commander thought he needed."⁵

Administratively, the 41st CA Company was a theater asset of U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV). The 41st CA Teams were parceled out to the Corps Commands. Then, the Corps Commands detailed the teams down to the South Vietnamese Army (ARVN) Province and District Headquarters.

Unlike the two other CA companies that arrived in Vietnam later, the 41st CA Teams were spread among three of the country's four Corps areas. In 1966, the four 41st Teams in I Corps (3, 5, 10, 16) were attached to the 29th Civil Affairs Company and eventually transferred to that unit.⁶ The 41st teams working in III Corps were reassigned to the II Field Force (II FFV) on 12 June 1966.⁷ It would be 1968 before those teams returned to 41st control. Such a confusing geographic spread for the small Company created problems. As 1LT Lee Livingston recalled years later, "All the different teams were doing different things. But we didn't know each other was doing it."⁸



During the Tet Offensive, the security situation throughout South Vietnam deteriorated. Here is one of Team 14's bridge projects that was damaged by the VC.



The 41st CA teams often had contact with local South Vietnamese militia called Regional Forces (RF)/Popular Forces (PF). Called 'Ruff-Puffs' for short, the RF/PF often provided labor and force protection for CA projects.



Much of the 41st Civil Affairs Company's work after the Tet Offensive was focused on helping refugees.



To help the local economy the 41st sponsored cottage industries by providing materials to the refugees. The CA Teams then arranged to sell the products to American troops. Some, like Montagnard crossbows, sold so well that the refugees could not keep up with the demand.

41st CA Locations 1968

Corps	Team	Attached to	Location
I Corps	3, 5, 10, 16	29th CA CO	
	1	MAC-V	Khanh Duong
	2	MAC-V	Ban Me Thout
	4	MAC-V	Song Mao
	6	MAC-V	Tam Quan
	7	MAC-V	Phan Thiết
	8	4th ID	Camp Enari
II Corps	9	MAC-V	Edap Enang
	11	MAC-V	Phu My
	12	MAC-V	Ham Thuan
	13	MAC-V	Bong Son
	14	MAC-V	Qui Nhon
	15	MAC-V	Pleiku
	Provisional	MAC-V	Nha Trang, Cam Ranh



After the Tet Offensive, the 41st CA Teams worked to improve the economic situation of the many Vietnamese that came to the refugee camps. This carpenter uses wood from packing and ammunition crates to make furniture.

After Tet, village improvement projects like those done in 1966-67 were an exercise in futility. First Lieutenant (1LT) David A. Clark (Team 14) reported that after the Tet Offensive, his team could work only in secure areas.¹¹ Previously, they had been building or repairing five bridges, but gave up after the VC mined the road to one, bombed another, and placed explosives “beneath the decking” of a third.¹²

The demands of heavy combat during Tet strained the American supply chain. This dramatically impacted the already resource-constrained 41st teams.¹³ Even food was scarce. 1LT David J. Schaffner recalled: “We did not have any capability of preparing food. We got some C rations and later on scratched around and got some LRRP [dehydrated Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol] rations that were really prized.” He said “we were kind of a scrounge operation . . . it was like camping out, with limited support.”¹⁴ Despite the environment, the 41st was deluged with a refugee problem because so many villagers fled to Vietnamese resettlement camps.¹⁵

CORDS estimated that the Tet Offensive resulted in more than 600,000 refugees throughout South Vietnam.¹⁶ Because villagers fled the now Communist-controlled countryside, by April 1968 most 41st CA teams were “occupied full time in refugee relief.” This equated to building housing and providing medical care, food, and clean water.¹⁷ The threat of epidemic disease in the camps resulted in 41st CA teams giving 13,783 immunizations. They also completed more than 200 projects during 1968, including building 39 bridges and

15 schools, constructing 63 road drainage culverts, and supervising the improvement or construction of 4000 kilometers of road. CA teams also managed the repair of 13 bridges, 12 culverts, and 30 kilometers of roads. Since the civilian population or Vietnamese regional security forces provided the labor, they acquired ownership and took pride in having learned how to do similar projects for themselves.¹⁸ The CA five-to-six man teams also promoted artisan skills to improve the economic circumstances of the refugees.

For example, Team 7 gave Montagnard refugees at Song Trao the materials to make crossbows and weave baskets that the CA soldiers marketed among the American soldiers. Most profit went to the craftsmen, but a little was put aside for village improvements.¹⁹ This enterprise was so successful that the Montagnards “were unable to keep up with the constant demands from American units for crossbows.”²⁰ Unfortunately, the 41st was less effective with agricultural programs.

Well-meaning American agricultural programs that touted increased food production in the refugee camps did not factor local economic conditions or the indigenous diet. Team 9 at Edap Enang, introduced a larger breed of pig to increase local food supplies. 1LT David J. Schaffner, who inherited the project when he came to the team, obtained leftover food from a far-away Army mess hall to ‘slop’ the pigs. He did not realize how hungry the Montagnards were. “I noticed that as we were putting that slop into the hog troughs, a little bit later the Montagnard kids would come along with gallon cans to scoop it out . . . for [their] dinner. I thought ‘Hey Toto, we are not in Kansas anymore.’”²¹ And, unlike the native pot-belly breed, the larger imported pigs were not used to poor sanitation or having to scrounge for scraps. They soon died of disease and malnutrition.²²

The 41st CA teams tried to introduce a higher-yield rice strain (IR-8). It needed pesticides and fertilizers but yielded far more than native types. “The only problem we had with it was that the Vietnamese would not eat it . . . it would triple their yield, but they said that it did not taste right,” said 1LT Earl C. Palmer (Team 14).²³ 1LT Schaffner (Team 9) summed it up: “We tried many projects but a lot of time we put the cart before the horse. In today’s jargon, we were not using appropriate technology.”²⁴

Although the CA teams tried to assist the refugees as much as possible, the ethnic Vietnamese dominated government demonstrated little concern for the Montagnards. Captain Darrell J. Buffaloe (Team 9 from November 1968 to August 1969 at Edap Enang) recalled that “we had very little interaction with the government of South Vietnam. The problem I saw was that the U.S. and the Government of Vietnam did not understand the culture of the Jarai Montagnard people.”²⁵

Corrupt local Vietnamese administrators perpetuated the poor conditions in the refugee camps. New arrivals had only what they could carry and often found little available housing. Local officials often pilfered construction materials



Lieutenant General William R. Peers, the commanding general of I Field Force Vietnam, awarded the 41st a Meritorious Unit Commendation in 1968 for assisting the peoples of South Vietnam. LTG Peers places a streamer on the 41st Company flag while Company commander, Lieutenant Colonel Daniel H. Bauer looks on.



The IR-8 strain of rice was developed in the early sixties and substantially increased yields. Although the 41st tried to introduce it in Vietnam, the strain was not widely accepted because it required the use of pesticides and fertilizers and did not taste the same as native rice.



1LT David A. Clark served on Team 14 during the Tet Offensive.



1LT Earl C. Palmer.

furnished by the U.S. and South Vietnamese governments. Many coerced the refugees into buying back the same stolen materials. Given little recourse, many chose to return to their villages in the VC-controlled areas. Therefore, Saigon-appointed province chiefs were responsible to some degree for negating the efforts of the CA teams promoting the legitimacy of South Vietnam's government.²⁶

The U.S. Army recognized the accomplishments of the 41st CA Company with a Meritorious Unit Citation for its service post-Tet.²⁷ Lieutenant General William R. Peers, the commander of I Field Force, Vietnam centered in the II Corps area, awarded the 41st CA the citation for "tirelessly instilling in the Vietnamese people a greater confidence in themselves and their government, thereby making them less dependent on U.S. support. Through their initiative, determination and resourcefulness, the men of the company have materially advanced the struggle against Communist aggression in the Republic of Vietnam."²⁸ Later, LTG Peers admitted that the Army commitment to CA was not "anywhere near what it should be."²⁹ By late 1968 and into early 1969 the CA teams were able to return to the countryside to conduct projects in villages, much like had been done before Tet, because the security situation was much improved.

1LT Gary W. Faith (Team 15) worked under the direction of the MACV Province Advisor and closely with CORDS and USAID. "We did not get much direction from [41st] headquarters . . . only administrative support . . . We did not get a lot of direct assignments so we kind of went out on our own to take a look at some of the villages . . . we would not tell anybody where we were going except the radio operators [at the Province Advisor Teams] . . . We would invariably try to find one route in and another out to avoid ambushes. Keeping in contact with the radio operators at the MACV compound was our force protection."³⁰ Staff Sergeant (SSG) Jimmie Gonzalez Jr. (Team 15) said that they always tried to get out of villages around Pleiku by 1600 to return back to base in daylight.³¹

Typical CA missions were conducted by two or three men, one of whom was a medic. Jeeps had sandbags on the floor for mine protection and pulled a supply trailer. Faith

said "We would get into the villages as fast as we could and do a MEDCAP." Faith assessed "the number of males there, and asked questions about strange people coming into the village . . . trying to see who was who and what was what." Then, "We took care of the immediate needs [malaria, dehydration, malnutrition, and diarrhea] . . . if they did not have medications, we would try to get them, but only enough for a day or two because we knew that some of the meds would be picked up by the [VC] . . . Probably the most popular treatment was getting teeth pulled. There was no anesthetic but they were not used to it anyway," said Faith.³² Medics, the centerpiece of the MEDCAP, were the 'tip of the spear' for the CA units because they opened the way with 'hands on' treatment. The rest of the team had to find commonalities with the residents.

Since the early days, the 41st CA soldiers always had to find 'common ground' with those in the villages. Acceptance in a community made their work easier and more effective. A simple way to do this was to partake in local food and drink when offered to avoid offending the locals. Home-brewed rice wine was a regular offering. It was drunk through a straw from a large open pot. SGT Forbes (Team 9) said he never wanted to "visualize what was in the pot. I drank it as fast as I could . . . I got so drunk that I did not care!"³³ 1LT Gary Faith (Team 15) said, "The worst thing you could do was lose suction on the straw and have to start sucking on it again. You would pull up something from the bottom, but you did not know if it was a bug or a piece of rice."³⁴ Speaking Vietnamese also helped, but even this was problematic.

SSG Jimmie Gonzalez was the interpreter on Team 15 at Pleiku. He learned Vietnamese at an *ad hoc* language school in the U.S. However, he found that the Montagnards were reluctant to speak that language. Gonzalez also spoke French, having previously been assigned to Verdun, France. Knowing that Vietnam was a former French colony, Gonzalez tried his French. The Montagnard elders "lit up" upon hearing French and were then eager to work with the CA team.³⁵ The CA soldiers also had to become ingenious to obtain supplies.

SP5 Ronald E. Matheson recalled that because of their liberal appropriation of supplies, his CA team operated "on the fringe." "Our Team Leader, CPT David R. Caswell, got us out of more scrapes with MPs . . . than I can really remember. We made friends where it counted . . . we basically were good scroungers. CPT Caswell sometimes was surprised at [the materials] we came up with, but told me one time something that I believe today: 'Where there is a will, there is a way.'"³⁶ SSG Gonzalez described how his Team 15 upgraded their weaponry. They were first outfitted with M2 carbines that they received from a nearby Special Forces team. Because they did not feel comfortable with the M2s, they traded them for WWII-era M3 'Greasegun' submachine-guns. Then, they traded them for M-16s and an M-79 grenade launcher—all off the books.³⁷ Supply shortages were the least of the persistent problems.

41st CA Locations 1969

Corps	Team	Attached to	Location
II Corps	1	MAC-V	Khanh Hoa
	2, 2A	MAC-V	Darlac
	4	MAC-V	Binh Thuan
	6	MAC-V	Binh Dinh
	7	MAC-V	Binh Thuan
	8	4 th ID	4 th ID
	9	MAC-V	Pleiku
	9A, 11	MAC-V	Binh Dinh
	12	MAC-V	Phu Yon
	13, 13A, 14, 14A	MAC-V	Binh Dinh
	15	MAC-V	Pleiku
	Cam Ranh	MAC-V	Cam Ranh
	Nha Trang	MAC-V	Khanh Hoa

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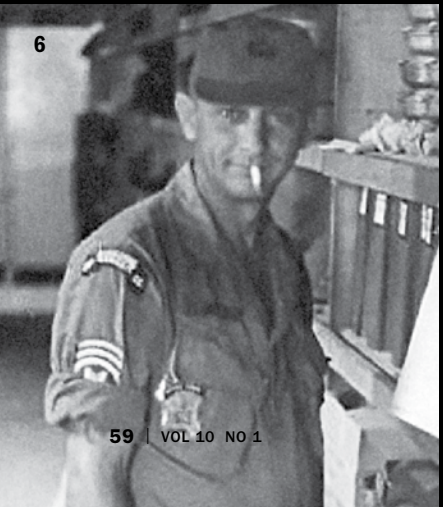
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Building Rapport & Getting Dirty

1 SSG Jimmie Gonzalez's knowledge of French from a tour in Europe unexpectedly helped him in Vietnam. Because Vietnam was a former French colony, many village elders could converse in that language.

2 Like soldiers everywhere, the 41st Teams drew kids like a magnet. Building rapport with the locals often began here.

3 Members of the 41st had to engage in local cultural activities lest they unintentionally offend those that they were trying to help. One ceremony that the 41st Teams could not refuse was drinking home-brewed rice wine through a straw out of a clay jug.

4 Soldiers of the 41st made fast friends with many of the Vietnamese children as did Specialist Richard MacAdoo.

5 Lieutenant Gary W. Faith was on Team 15.

6 The soldiers of the 41st CA Company came from a variety of backgrounds. For instance Glen L. Mizer, the interpreter and senior non-commissioned officer of Team 9, was a veteran of the 5th Ranger Infantry Company (Airborne) (RICA) during the Korean War.

7 A popular project, when time and material was available, was to make playground equipment for the children. Such projects went a long way in winning over the locals.

8 Another project for the 41st teams was to provide veterinary care. SP5 Ron E. Matheson holds a calf down while another 41st CA member gives it an injection.

9 Although they were not supposed to do the job by themselves, CA personnel had to 'get dirty.' They often had to show the locals how to perform tasks, get them enthused about a project, and then step back so that the villagers developed a sense of ownership.

10 In general, Civil Affairs units in Vietnam were not high on the Army's priority for supplies. They often had to scrounge materials, such as this metal roof sheeting, in order to accomplish their projects.

11 Team 9's house at Edap Enang. In front of the quarters are barrels filled with earth and topped with sandbags for protection against VC attacks.



8



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A goal of the 41st teams was to get the locals involved in projects, such as mixing concrete to form into blocks. After the concrete was mixed, it was put into forms and left to harden. Not only did helping on a project give them a sense of ownership, but it also taught the villagers construction skills.



A dearth of CA-trained officers was a constant. Civil Affairs companies were officer-heavy organizations. However, in April 1969, only four of the fourteen 'authorized' Team commanders had attended the Civil Affairs School at Fort Gordon, GA.³⁸ Those that did, like 1LT Gary W. Faith, recalled that "the Civil Affairs Career Course focused on both conventional and unconventional war. We learned about Military Government as well as Civic Action. Most helpful was material about language, customs, religion, peoples, culture, the history of Vietnam, and taboos. I think the CA training I had allowed me to keep a better focus on our mission and made me much more sensitive than others about the indigenous people."³⁹ He was one of the lucky few to arrive with CA training.

With few CA-trained officers, the 41st had to educate and train incoming personnel for their CA roles and missions in South Vietnam. Officers, often assigned directly from replacement depots, had little idea what CA was. The company headquarters in Nha Trang gave them a short course in revolutionary warfare and encouraged them to either to attend the CORDS orientation course in



President Richard M. Nixon began 'Vietnamization,' in which the South Vietnamese were given greater responsibility for their own defense, thereby allowing American servicemen to come home. The 41st Civil Affairs Company was selected to return to the United States in 1970.

Saigon or to complete the U.S. Army Institute for Military Assistance (today's USAJFKSWCS) 'Internal Defense and Development' (IDAD) correspondence course. After 1968, the 41st headquarters also hosted two-to-three day Civil Affairs Platoon (Team) Commander's Conferences to allow officers to share their successes and failures with their peers in the 29th and 2nd CA Companies.⁴⁰ Chemical Corps CPT M. Szalachetka, assigned to Team 6 in 1969, was an officer new to CA.⁴¹ When asked at the time if the in-country training prepared him, he responded, "I wouldn't use the word adequately, but I would say that . . . they enabled me to have a basic grasp and understanding of what the team was doing." But, "I wish I had been better trained in Civil Affairs."⁴²

Some assigned soldiers went straight to a team without the benefit of even a little training.⁴³ Transportation Corps 1LT Glenn Sullivan recalled that when reassigned from a Truck Company directly into the 41st, he was totally unaware that CA existed. He was put aboard a C-7 Caribou and flown to his new team. "The first day we were out, we were digging a well . . . I was totally lost."⁴⁴ The enlisted soldiers rarely had experience in Civil Affairs before being slated for the 41st CA Company. They were assigned based on their MOS, civilian skills, or education specialty.⁴⁵

It was U.S. domestic politics that determined the fate of the 41st CA in Vietnam. In late 1968, President-elect Richard M. Nixon promised a war-weary America that after taking office he was going to reduce U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Under 'Vietnamization,' U.S. units began turning over the brunt of the combat operations to a well-equipped and better trained South Vietnamese military. Amazingly, the 41st was one of the first units selected for deactivation in 1970. When he received orders to disband the 41st CA in-country, LTC Jonnie Forte, Jr. said, "It came as a surprise to everyone that Civil Affairs companies would be taken out of Vietnam at this time." He believed that the core of 'Vietnamization' was pacification and development. "From this standpoint it absolutely makes no sense whatsoever to deactivate a Civil Affairs company [when that is] our

Lineage of the 41st CA

The 41st Civil Affairs Company traces its lineage to the end of World War II. Formed at the Presidio of Monterey, California, on 25 August 1945, the 41st Military Government Headquarters Company served on occupation duty in South Korea from 1 November 1945 until its deactivation at Kunsan on 31 May 1947. Redesignated on 1 February 1955 as the 41st Military Government Company, the unit was reactivated on 18 March 1955 at Fort Gordon, Georgia. It was redesignated the 41st Civil Affairs Company on 25 June 1959.¹ While assigned to the 95th Civil Affairs Group, elements of the Company served in the Dominican Republic in 1965. The 41st was the first Civil Affairs unit assigned to the Republic of Vietnam, and served there from December 1965 until its deactivation on 28 February 1970. The unit received the Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Palm, the Vietnamese Civic Actions Honor Medal, and three awards of the Meritorious Unit Commendation.² Three of its members were killed in Vietnam: 1LT Sigfrid R. Karlstrom, 2LT Robert James Sovizal, and Specialist Four William Edward Dick, Jr.³



I FFV Commanding General Lieutenant General William R. Peers and 41st Civil Affairs Company Commander Lieutenant Colonel Daniel H. Bauer celebrate the company's award of the Meritorious Unit Citation for its actions from 1 January to 31 July 1968.

mission." LTC Forte concluded by saying that in order to win the war, South Vietnam had to get its citizens "to feel that government will respond to their needs . . . We are not going to win the war just by shooting and killing people."⁴⁶

The CA teams took the news hard. SP5 Ron E. Matheson said, "We knew in January [1970] that the 41st was being [disbanded] in February. My first concern was giving away to the 'Yards' and Vietnamese some of the things we had accumulated for ourselves . . . It was [only] a matter of time before the US was going to pull out of 'Nam' altogether." "I still wonder what happened to those 'Yards' and Vietnamese that we came to know personally."⁴⁷ Thus, after five years of service in Vietnam, the U.S. Army deactivated the 41st CA Company on 28 February 1970, with little concern for its successes.

What did the 41st CA accomplish? 1LT Earl C. Palmer (Team 14) believed they made a difference: "Whenever you enter an area, it was always obvious when a CA Team had been there. The yards in front of the houses had been swept and there was no trash in the yards."⁴⁸ 1LT Glenn Sullivan (Team 13) echoed Palmer's comments. "We felt that we were doing something positive. We were very aware that it was an issue of 'hearts and minds' . . . we really felt like we were trying to make a difference and that the Vietnamese appreciated what we were doing."⁴⁹ The 41st did make a difference in Vietnam, despite a lack of direction and dedicated support.

It was through individual perseverance, a strong work ethic, and a personal sense of mission that the soldiers of the 41st Civil Affairs Company succeeded. After relinquishing command in August 1969, LTC Daniel H. Bauer summed it up well: "Our mission was not the mission of combat

assault, but that of supporting the people of Vietnam in finding better ways to help themselves to a better life. In the accomplishment of this mission we have at times been misunderstood. We have been relegated to a position of low priority and yet have been able to persevere. Any unit can do an outstanding job when all of the resources are furnished without question, but only an outstanding unit can accomplish its mission with minimal support and resources."⁵⁰

With ARSOF forces engaged worldwide today, it is important to remember that CA is an integral part of UW. Although these Vietnam experiences are a small part of CA history, the actions of those veterans provided good examples for today. An innovative and enthusiastic CA effort, even if done uphill, is always a force-multiplier. Their accomplishments were not forgotten. On 25 September 2012, the 41st CA Company's lineage became a part of the newly activated 83rd Civil Affairs Battalion (CAB) of the 85th Civil Affairs Brigade.⁵¹ When the 83rd CAB stood up, several 41st veterans were proudly in attendance. ♣

Thank you: I would like to thank the veterans of the 41st Civil Affairs Company who provided their time and materials for this series of articles on the 41st Civil Affairs Company in 1965-1970. In particular, Elmer M. Pence, John Schmidt, Larry A. Castagnato, Lee Livingston, Gary W. Faith, Patrick S. Brady, Jimmie Gonzalez, David Gunn, David Forbes, David Schaffner, Ronald E. Matheson, Earl Palmer, Ivars Bembris, Darrell J. Buffaloe, David Clark, Dr. Michael D. Sparago, Theodore Llana, Jr, and Andrew Lattu went out of their way to answer questions and furnish photographs.

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Endnotes

- 1 David Forbes, email to Dr. Troy J. Sacquety, 6 February 2009, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 2 The first installment, "Battle Without Bullets: The 41st Civil Affairs Company in the Vietnam War-Part I: 1965-1967," appeared in *Veritas*, Volume 5, Number 3.
- 3 CPT Jeffrey J. Clarke, "Historical Project, Army Civil Affairs Operations in Southeast Asia," 25 January 1974, Box 47, Civil Affairs Vietnam-1973, History Support Center, USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 4 **Three CA Companies served in Vietnam: the 41st, 2nd, and 29th.** William R. Berkman, "Civil Affairs in Vietnam," U.S. Army War College, 28 December 1973, p. 11. Copy found in the MG William R. Berkman collection, USASOC History Support Center, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 5 See Office, Chief of Information, Department of the Army, *Special Warfare*, (Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1962).
- 6 Department of the Army, FM 41-10, *Civil Affairs Operations* (Washington D.C., 14 May 1952), 3.
- 7 Department of the Army, FM 41-10, *Civil Affairs Operations* (Washington D.C., 14 May 1952), 145.
- 8 LTC (ret)Theodore Llana, Jr, telephone interview by Dr. Troy J. Sacquety, 19 November 2009, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 9 **It had additional *ad hoc* teams.**
- 10 1LT John F. Seiber, Annual Supplement, History of the 41st Civil Affairs Company, 1 January 1968-31 December 1968," copy in USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 11 1LT William R. Beavers, "Information Bulletin Number 7-68," 22 April 1968, F 40 "41st CA Company Readings, 66-70," Box 32, Civil Affairs Vietnam 1970-73, USASOC History Office Support Center.
- 12 CPT William R. Beavers, "Monthly Civic Action Report," 29 April 1968, Box 20, Civil Affairs Vietnam 1968-3, ARSOF Archives, JFK Special Warfare Museum. **Two of the three 41st CA Company members that were killed in Vietnam were lost in 1968.**
- 13 1LT Seiber, History of the 41st Civil Affairs Company, 1 January 1968-31 December 1968."
- 14 David Schaffner, interview by Dr. Troy J. Sacquety, 12 June 2009, Redding, CA, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC. **He later left to go work as a 41st CA member with CORDS.**
- 15 1LT John F. Seiber, Annual Supplement, History of the 41st Civil Affairs Company, 1 January 1968-31 December 1968," copy in USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 16 Frank Leith Jones, *Blowtorch: Robert Komer, Vietnam, and American Cold War Strategy* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2013), 178.
- 17 1LT William R. Beavers, Monthly Civic Action Report, 8 April 1968, F 40 "41st CA Company Readings, 66-70," Box 32, Civil Affairs Vietnam 1970-73, USASOC History Office Support Center.
- 18 Seiber, "History of the 41st Civil Affairs Company, 1 January 1968-31 December 1968."
- 19 CPT William R. Beavers, "Monthly Civic Action Report," 4 June 1968, F 40 "41st CA Company Readings, 66-70," Box 32, Civil Affairs Vietnam 1970-73, USASOC History Office Support Center; CPT William R. Beavers, "Monthly Civic Action Report," 29 April 1968, Box 20, Civil Affairs Vietnam 1968-3, USASOC History Office Support Center.
- 20 LTC Johnnie Forte, Jr., "Operational Report, Lessons Learned, Headquarters, 41st Civil Affairs Company, Period Ending 31 October 1969," 19 January 1970, F 10, Box 33, Civil Affairs Vietnam 1970-4, USASOC History Office Support Center. **When refugees arrived at the resettlement camps, they often found little with which to sustain themselves. Local officials often pilfered supplies provided by the U.S. and South Vietnamese governments and then coerced refugees into buying the stolen materials. In disgust, many Montagnards simply returned to their VC-controlled villages.** See Seiber, "History of the 41st Civil Affairs Company, 1 January 1968-31 December 1968."
- 21 David Schaffner, interview by Dr. Troy J. Sacquety, 12 June 2009, Redding, CA, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 22 1LT Edward P. Ruminski, "Edap Enang Resettlement Center, Pleiku Province, Team #9, 41st Civil Affairs Company," July 1968, F 15, Box 19, Civil Affairs Vietnam 1968-2, USASOC History Office Support Center.
- 23 Earl Palmer talk, 2008 41st Civil Affairs Reunion, 14 June 2008, San Antonio, TX, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 24 Schaffner interview.
- 25 Darell Buffaloe, email to Dr. Troy J. Sacquety, 17 November 2009, subject: "41st CA Coy," USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 26 Seiber, "History of the 41st Civil Affairs Company, 1 January 1968-31 December 1968."
- 27 1LT Seiber, History of the 41st Civil Affairs Company, 1 January 1968-31 December 1968."
- 28 1LT Seiber, History of the 41st Civil Affairs Company, 1 January 1968-31 December 1968."
- 29 "Generals Palmer and Peers Call for Continued Use of CA, But. . ." *Military Government Journal and Newsletter: A Military Government Publication* (Vol 23, No. 5: May 1970).
- 30 Gary Faith interview by Dr. Troy J. Sacquety, 12 June 2009, Redding California, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.

- 31 CSM (ret) Jimmie Gonzalez, Jr., interview by Dr. Troy J. Sacquety, 25 September 2012, USAOC History Office Classified files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 32 Faith interview.
- 33 David Forbes talk, 41st Civil Affairs Reunion, 13 June 2009, Redding CA.
- 34 Faith interview.
- 35 CSM (Ret) Gonzalez interview.
- 36 Ron Matheson, email to Dr. Troy J. Sacquety, 24 July 2008, subject: "41st CA Coy," USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 37 CSM (Ret) Gonzalez interview.
- 38 **There were additional *ad hoc* teams not reflected on MTO&E 41-500D dated 7 January 1969.** MAJ Johnnie Forte, Jr., "Operational Report of the 41st Civil Affairs Company for Period ending 31 July 1969, RCS CSFOR-65 (R1), 19 August 1969, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 39 Gary Faith email to Dr. Troy J. Sacquety, 27 February 2007, subject: 41st CA CO., USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 40 Seiber, "History of the 41st Civil Affairs Company, 1 January 1968-31 December 1968," 1LT John F. Seiber, "Operational Report of 41st Civil Affairs Company for Period Ending 30 April 1969, RCS CSFOR-65 (R1)," 11 May 1969, F 40 "41st CA Company Readings, 66-70," Box 32, Civil Affairs, USASOC History Office Support Center.
- 41 **CA Teams were called platoons in 1969.**
- 42 CPT Szalachetka interview, 19687, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 43 1LT John F. Seiber, "Operational Report of 41st Civil Affairs Company for Period Ending April 30 1969, RCS CSFOR-65 (R1), 11 May 1969, F 40 "41st CA Company Readings, 66-70," Box 32, Civil Affairs Vietnam 1970-73, USASOC History Office Support Center.
- 44 Glenn R. Sullivan, Jr., interviewed by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 27 April 2006, Fort Bragg, NC, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 45 **As early as 1966, observers noted the lack of CA-specific training in the 41st.** COL John M. Kinzer to COL Wanslore, "Civil Affairs Activities of the 41st Civil Affairs Company in Vietnam," 10 March 1966, F 40 "41st CA Company Readings, 66-70," Box 32, Civil Affairs Vietnam 1970-73, USASOC History Office Support Center.
- 46 LTC Jonnie Forte interview, [late 1969].
- 47 Ron Matheson, email to Dr. Troy J. Sacquety, 17 November 2009, subject: "Paret 2," USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 48 "Spot-Lite on LT Earl Palmer," *CA Spotlight* (Fort Gordon, Georgia), 18 October 1968.
- 49 Glenn R. Sullivan, Jr., interviewed by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 27 April 2006, Fort Bragg, NC, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 50 LTC Daniel H. Bauer, "Commander's Farewell Remarks," 9 August 1969, copy provided by Mr. David Gunn, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 51 Email from MAJ Rachel D. Sullivan to Dr. Troy J. Sacquety, "83rd Civil Affairs Battalion Activation," 5 September 2012, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.

The 41st Unit Organization Sidebar

- 1 CPT Jeffrey J. Clarke, "Historical Project, Army Civil Affairs Operations in Southeast Asia," 25 January 1974, Box 47, Civil Affairs Vietnam-1973, USASOC History Support Center, Fort Bragg, NC. **The commanders of the 41st CA in Vietnam were LTC Johnnie Forte (Aug 69-Feb 70), LTC Daniel H. Bauer (Sept 68-Aug 69), and LTC Paul A. Paulson (Dec 67-Sept 68), LTC John O. All (July 67 to Dec 67), LTC Theodore Llana, Jr (Nov 66 to July 67), and MAJ Howard C. Wiggins (Dec 65-Nov 66).**
- 2 <http://www.2ndcivilaffairs.com/>, accessed 30 July 2008. **In addition to the 140 men of the 41st, there were only 288 other soldiers assigned to CA units in Vietnam in June 1968. The 2nd Civil Affairs Company had 171 and the 29th Civil Affairs Company with 117. This is contrasting with a total U.S. Army strength of 354,300 in June 1968.** Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle* (New York, New York: Galahad Books, 1986), 238; LTG Joseph M. Heiser, Vietnam Studies Logistic Support (Department of the Army: Washington, DC, 1991), 14.
- 3 Stanley Sandler, *Glad to See Them Come and Sorry to See Them Go: A History of U.S. Army Tactical Civil Affairs/Military Government, 1775-1991* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1999), 358.
- 4 **By 1969 there were a total of ten authorized platoons, and seven provisional ones deployed by the 41st throughout II Corps.** MAJ Johnnie Forte, Jr., "Operational Report of the 41st Civil Affairs Company for Period Ending 31 July 1969, RCS CSFOR-65 (R1)," 19 August 1969, 41st CA Company Report: OPS Jul 69, F 54, Civil Affairs Vietnam 1969-5, Box 27, USASOC History Support Center, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 5 Gary Faith email to Dr. Troy J. Sacquety, 27 February 2009, subject: 41st CA CO., USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 6 CPT R. W. Miller, "41st Civil Affairs Company," *The Typhoon*, July 1968, 16., 1LT John F. Seiber, Annual Supplement, History of the 41st Civil Affairs Company, 1 January 1968-31 December 1968," copy in USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 7 CPT Clarke, "Historical Project," 25 January 1974.
- 8 Lee Livingston talk, 2008 41st Civil Affairs Reunion, 14 June 2008, San Antonio, TX, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.

Lineage of the 41st Civil Affairs Company Sidebar

- 1 "Welcome to the 95th Civil Affairs Group," original pamphlet loaned by Mr. Gary W. Faith.; MG Kenneth G. Wickham, "Department of the Army, Lineage and Honors: 41st Civil Affairs Company," 10 January 1968, copy located in the USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 2 **The three awards of the Meritorious Unit Commendation were for actions from 12 January to 31 December 1966, all of 1967, and 1 January to 31 July 1968.** Lineage and Honors, 83d Civil Affairs Battalion, found on-line at <http://www.history.army.mil/html/forcestruc/lineages/branches/civaf/0083cabn.htm>, accessed 15 May 2014.
- 3 <http://41stcivilaffairs.com/>, accessed 24 July 2008; "Annual Historical Summary, Headquarters, 41st Civil Affairs Company, 1 January 1965 to 31 December 1965, Copy in the USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.