

THIS IS WHAT HAPPENED WHEN YOU HEARD SEABEES WERE HURT  
THESE WERE FROM A SPECIAL STAFF TEAM. THE NIGHT THIS HAPPENED IT WAS ROUGH FOR US TOO.

# Allies Build Underground Camp Near DMZ

Story and Photos  
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CON THIEN, Vietnam — Behind the young Seabee the hill sloped away into the demilitarized zone, while all around him sailors dug, cut and pounded into shape one of the most formidable Special Forces camps in Vietnam.

On the slopes of the 518-foot hill Marine tractors ripped out the trees and brush through which the enemy might crawl in darkness. U.S. Army and Vietnamese Special Forces worked with civilian irregular defense group companies on inner defensive positions.

The hill is alive with people rushing to get the work done, but it has to be done well.

Con Thien Special Forces Camp is being built less than two miles south of the DMZ, where from three to four North Vietnamese divisions are believed to be based.

Navy Lt. Alfred Duncan of Washington, D.C. describes the jobs his Seabees are working on, including a just completed 2,150-foot airstrip and a fresh water well under construction.

"It's different, challenging and a little glamorous," he says, being so close to the DMZ.

Unaware of what's to come, Duncan watched lightning flashes against dark clouds over the north. A few hours later enemy soldiers poured from the darkness and wounded five of his men.

That night the North Vietnam-

ese—who understand what is being placed below them and have already demonstrated their feelings about it—sent at least two battalions against the Marines at the camp.

With the help of U.S. and Vietnamese Special Forces the Leathernecks killed about 200 enemy troops.

Army Capt. Craig Chamberlain of El Paso, Tex., talks proudly of his defenses and feels that when the camp is completed and the Marines have moved out to continue other operations, Con Thien will be able to hold off two enemy regiments.

Chamberlain leads Special Forces Det. A-110 and is senior adviser to the camp commander, Capt. Nguyen Dinh Thuan. The Special Forces will advise five companies of CIDG based at Con Thien.

The base is taking the form of a small underground village. The control rooms, mess hall, medical facilities and sleeping quarters are being built beneath the hilltop. A network of trenches and tunnels will connect the rooms.

Standing at what is now the western end of a buffer strip being cleared just south of the DMZ, Con Thien is part of a larger attempt at reducing enemy infiltration into Quang Tri Province.



Seabees install a stairway into one of the buildings being built at the Con Thien Special Forces camp. Much of the camp is being built underground.

