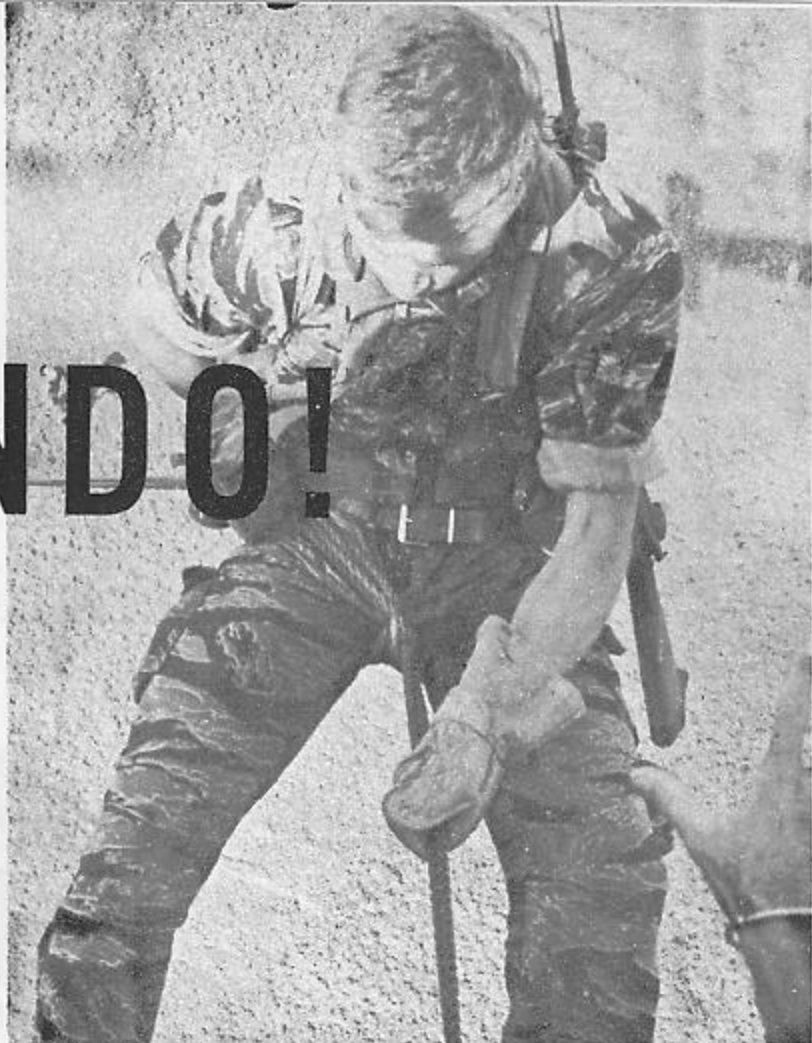


# RECONDO!

**SSG Bob Rounsefell**

***RAPPELLING.** Students practise the art, first on the tower and then from the helicopter.*

***ACCURACY.** A Recondo student zeroes his M-16.*



Whirling in at tree-top level and flaring out, the chopper settles toward the ground. Fifty meters away, the jungle looms, dark and ominous.

Inside the Huey, camouflaged faces are grim and tense. Thumbs rest alongside the M16's safety, and fingers lightly caress triggers. Sharp eyes scan the treeline trying to pierce the darkness and seek out possible dangers. Leg muscles tense in anticipation.

"GO", shouts SSG Oran Root, Port Orchard, Wash., instructor/advisor. Six tiger-suited figures leap from the chopper and race toward the woodline. As the last man jumps clear, the pilot pulls his craft into the air while the door gunner keeps his M60 machine gun trained on the jungle.

Heliborne assault? In a manner of speaking! Actually, these men are going to school, a very unique school. It is the only school in the Army which requires a man to go on a combat operation in order to graduate.

It is the MACV Recondo School located at Nha Trang. Instructors are from the 5th Special Forces Group; all are combat veterans, and many are on their second and third tours in Vietnam.

The first Recondo school was opened by General William C. Westmoreland at the home of the 101st Airborne Division, Ft. Campbell, Ky. Again, it was General Westmoreland who directed in mid-1966 that a Recondo school be opened here in Vietnam.

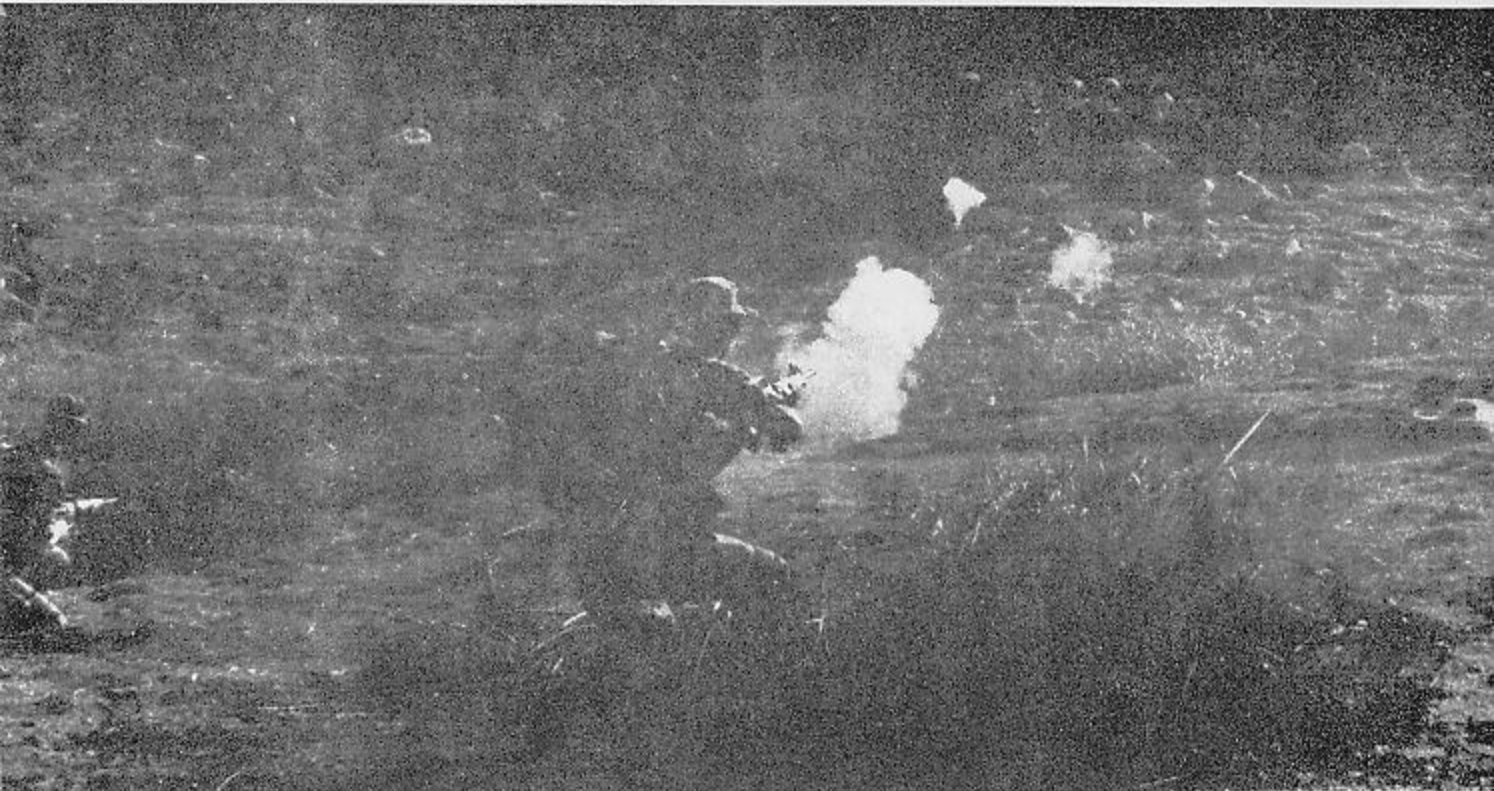
On September 16, 1966, the general officially opened the MACV Recondo School. The first class was graduated on Oct. 1, 1966. Since that time, the school has been turning out Recondo's at the rate of two classes per month.

One-hundred and thirty students start each month; approximately 85 successfully complete the gruelling three-week course.

"A Recondo must be as much at home in the jungle or forest as in a dayroom," said General Westmoreland. "As long as we are in Vietnam, we are going to need Recondo."

The school has the mission of training selected personnel from the United States and other Free World Military Assistance Forces in the

***CONTACT! Long hours of immediate action drills pay off when Charlie opens up.***







specialized techniques and skills necessary to conduct long-range reconnaissance patrols (LRRP) in Vietnam.

A Recondo's job is four-fold: Reconnaissance, raids, ambushes and intelligence gathering. The latter probably being the most important, considerable emphasis is placed on the ways and means of successfully performing these missions throughout the training.

"A Recondo has several capabilities," said MSG Paul V. Tracy, Cathedral City, California, senior instructor, who is on his fifth tour in Vietnam, "including deep penetration, detection of enemy cache sites,





*SSG Oran Root, instructor/advisor, eyes the terrain as the chopper nears the LRRP infiltration point.*

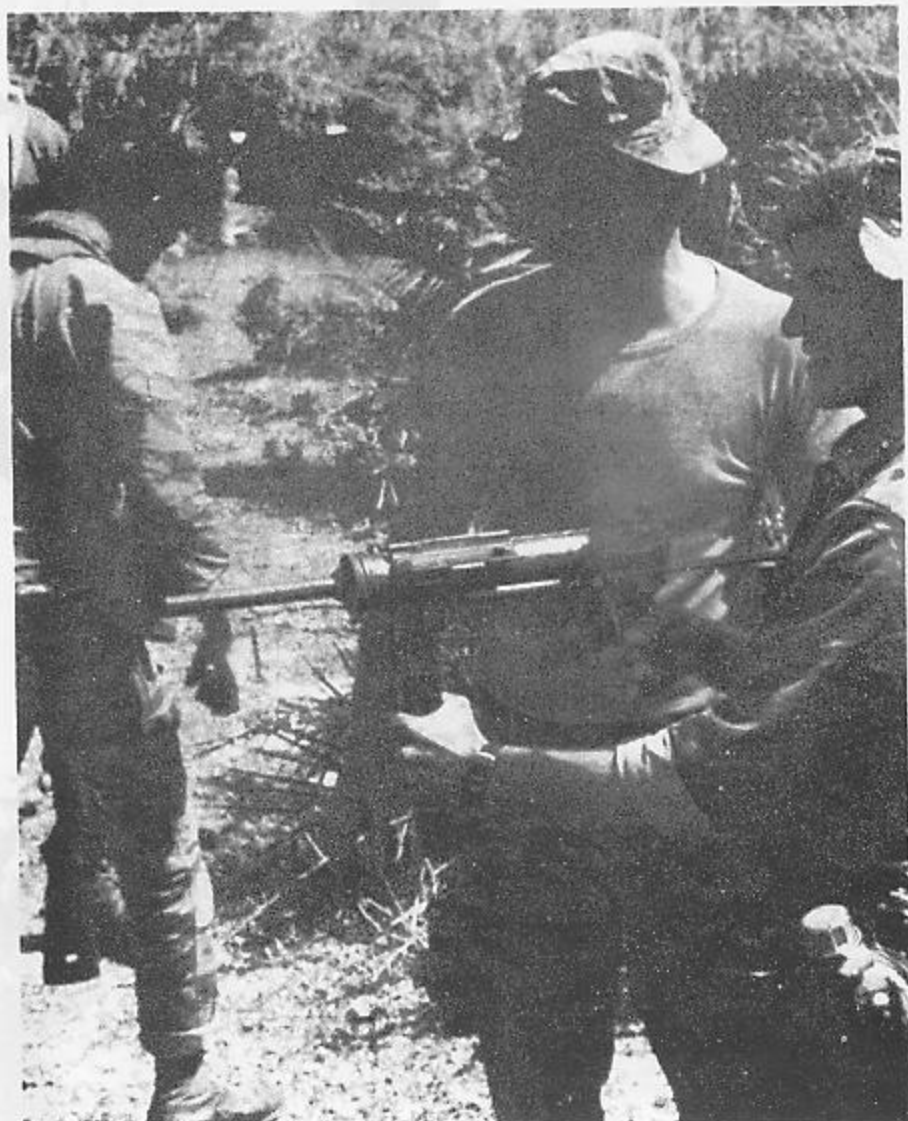
Most of these subjects are taught during the first week, which is mainly classroom work. Stress is placed on weapons and communications.

During the second week, the student learns means of infiltration and exfiltration, use of the McGuire rig (three seats which hang below a helicopter to lift men out of rugged terrain), and rappelling, developed from the mountaineering technique.

base areas, infiltration routes and Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army units. He must also be able to conduct air and artillery strikes and lead reaction forces to targets."

Muscle-tearing physical training at 4:30 a.m. begins each day. During the first two weeks, students are taught map reading, patrolling, friendly and enemy weapons, field medical training, communications, air operations, and selection of drop zones (DZ) and landing zones (LZ).

*SSG James Gudgell coaches a student with a "grease gun".*



Also during the second week, the student Recondo's do practical work in LZ selection by going on a mission into Charlie-land complete with "pop-up, shoot-back" targets.

The last three days of the second week are conducted at the Mission Support Site on the island of Hon Tre. Here, practical work in patrolling, ambushes, land navigation and immediate action drill is carried out in addition to weapons firing.



***MOVE OUT! SSG Root (above) passes the word during LZ selection mission***



## Recondo

Weapons firing is an important portion of the course. In addition to familiarization firing of all known small arms in RVN, the Recondo is taught "snap shooting", the art of firing quickly and accurately from the hip.

"Move your eyes and gun muzzle together," entones SFC Billy McKeith, Columbia, La., conducting snap shooting exercises. "What you look at, your weapon should be pointing at. If you look first and then move your weapon, you lose a second; it only takes a second to die."

Here also, ground operations are taught and the students get their chance to direct a Forward Air Controller to a target. Many more long hours are spent doing Immediate Action drills.

"You must be able to function smoothly and effortlessly, as a team," said SFC Kenneth M. Loring, Cleveland. "LRRP's are not equipped nor intended to maintain long contact with the enemy. All you gotta do is find'em, and somebody else'll fix'em. If you get jumped and you don't break contact quickly, you're liable to get chopped up pretty bad."

The third week of training, nicknamed "You Bet Your Life", is a five-day combat operation, which will be covered in a separate article next month. During the penetration into VC territory, the students have a chance to practice what they have been taught. For many of them, it will be their first time under fire.

"The students, knowing that they will be applying what they have learned in school in a combat operation,



pay very close attention during training and have much higher knowledge retainability than they might have if attending a stateside course," remarked MAJ Robert G. Lunday, Nashville, Tenn., Assistant Commandant. "It is also the only school we know of where you are authorized to shoot the training aid."

Since the school was opened, only two students have been lost on a combat operation, which speaks well of the teaching ability of the leathery, tough Green Beret instructors.

Upon completion of his training, the Recondo returns to his unit qualified to instruct and perform long range reconnaissance. He is given a Recondo number, which is entered in his records and he retains for the rest of his Army career. He also receives the coveted Recondo patch which is worn on the right breast pocket. If he is good enough to be selected as the Honor Graduate, he is presented with a distinctive hunting knife known as a . . . you guessed it . . . Recondo knife.