

Fire Base Spruced Up for a Visit

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FIRE SUPPORT BASE SHAKEY, Cambodia, June 7 —The men of Company A, Fifth Battalion of the 60th Infantry, who are manning this muddy base high on a mountaintop northeast of the Fishhook, wore their hair short and had their faces shaven clean today. Some got new fatigues to replace those that they were wearing 38 days ago when they left the Mekong Delta to go on what they were told would be a three-day mission.

The last hammer blows were still being struck to complete a new enclosed latrine as seven helicopters bringing President Nixon's fact-finding mission of governors and legislators set down on the pad next to the base, which gets its name from the nickname of a soldier who was killed nearby.

Layer cake and oatmeal cookies, freshly baked, awaited the guests. The soldiers said they hoped that some would be left over because they have been living on C rations almost all the time.

They were unhappy about losing their beards and long hair, but those who got new fatigues were pleased to get into them and throw away the

mudcaked and torn ones they had been wearing.

They found some distraction from their dull routine also in a spectacular air strike against a neighboring hillside that began shortly after the visitors arrived. They said they had not seen one that near before and did not know why the hillside was being attacked.

A colonel of the First Cavalry Division (Airmobile) said it was undoubtedly "reconnaissance by fire," although air strikes are usually made only against specific targets.

Whatever the reason, it was spectacular. A twin fuselage Bronco observation plane first made several passes firing marker rockets, then F-100's swept in low, dropping bombs and napalm on the jungled mountainside.

Finally, the planes made several strafing passes. "If Charlie was in there," a sergeant said, "He's got a headache now."

A major then called on a field telephone for the jet fighter-bombers to make a pass over this base, presumably to salute the visitors. They did, twice, so low that they unnerved at least some of the guests.

While the neighboring hillside was being attacked, the Senators, Representatives and Governors were inspecting the manmade caves in the jungle on the slopes of this mountain in which the North Vietnamese Army had stored large quantities of arms, ammunition and other supplies, which are still being removed from here.

Senator George Murphy, Republican of California, at first demurred from climbing down a ladder into the cave, saying, "I swore off the last time I went down a coal mine," but he, too, went to view the stacks of crates of Chinese and Rumanian grenades and mortar shells.

The visitors saw large quantities of captured weapons here and in visits to the headquarters of the First Brigade of the 25th Infantry Division at Katum in Vietnam and in a storage depot at Dian base camp north of Saigon, where a spacious warehouse has been filled until it resembles a discount store for captured weapons.

The also received a number of briefings that confirmed their general belief that the American intervention in Cambodia had been useful and justified by the results.

The only member of the group not to share this view—Senator Thomas J. McIntyre, Democrat of New Hampshire—decided not to make the trip but to spend the day to studying the progress of pacification.

In the places they visited, officers presented to each visitor members of his constituency. The soldiers tended to keep to themselves their frequently negative views about the war in Vietnam in general and the incursion into Cambodia in particular.

"You wanna know where I'm going if I tell 'em?" a private first class said. "To L.B.J. or back out in the fields."

L.B.J. is the nickname for the Longbinh stockade.

At this base, chosen soldiers from each visitor's state were lined up behind stakes bearing the name of the state to facilitate contact between elected officials and the soldier.

The visitors will leave for Hawaii tomorrow to be briefed at the headquarters of the Commander in Chief of the United States Forces in the Pacific, Adm. John S. McCain Jr., they are being escorted by Bryce N. Harlow and Herbert G. Klein of the White House staff. The other members of the group are:

Senators Howard M. Cannon, Democrat of Nevada, and John C. Tower, Republican of Texas; Representatives William G. Bary, Republican of Indiana; Melvin Price, Democrat of Illinois; O. C. Fisher, Democrat of Texas, and G. William Whitehurst, Republican of Virginia, and Govs. John A. Love of Colorado, Republican; Raymond P. Shafer of Pennsylvania, Republican, and Robert E. McNair of South Carolina, Democrat.



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EXHIBIT: Captured enemy carbine being shown by South Vietnamese officer to Bryce N. Harlow, center, Presidential aide, and Senator Howard W. Cannon, Nevada Republican, during fact-finding tour. They are part of 11-man group sent to view allied operation.