

The Lucky 'Home'

FIRE BASE 11-BRAVO (Vietnam) — (AP) — The luckiest flew back, the rest walked, but they all were lucky and their smiles showed they knew it.

Cambodia was behind them — forever, they hoped — and happiness was a muddy fire base in Vietnam.

Mail and a hot meal. Beer and a secure-looking perimeter. Next to being home, there was only one other thing the soldiers could want.

"It's a girl," someone said, and the others picked it up.

"It's a girl," a soldier mumbled breathlessly, climbing and slipping behind his rushing mates toward the just-landed helicopter.

Only a General

When he reached the top of the first barrier, where the whole of Delta Company had gathered, his face dropped.

"It's only a general," he said.

"Hey, it's the man," said another soldier.

"So what?" muttered a third.

Maj. Gen. George W. Casey, 48, of Boston, command-

er of the first Air Cavalry Division, strode toward the grimy troops with a half dozen U.S. congressmen who had come to witness this historic day when the division withdrew its last men from two months' warring in Cambodia.

It's Good

"It feels good to see somebody from back in the world," said Sgt. Terry Coleman, 24, Santa Rosa, Calif., as the troops came down from the perimeter and surrounded the congressmen.

"Let's ask the general about the company R and R we were supposed to get two months ago," whispered a young soldier to two smiling comrades. They didn't.

The men of Delta Company and the rest of the Second Battalion, 12th Cavalry, had been in Cambodia right from the start of the incursion.

Early in the campaign the company found a weapons and ammunition cache that became known as Rock Island East and weighed 329 tons — the largest single ene-

my arsenal uncovered in Cambodia.

Ridge

The company spent its last days trying to capture an unnamed ridge six miles deep in Cambodia. It got within 25 yards of the crest but the North Vietnamese held the June 30 deadline for withdrawing from Cambodia closed on the Americans, and they pulled back.

By the time Delta Company returned to Vietnam, half its men had been killed or wounded.

Helicopters ferried the company into this new fire base, 100 miles north of Saigon and a mile on the Vietnamese side of the border.

Spec. 4 Robert Lowe, 22, of Baltimore said:

"We took a lot of stuff away from Charlie and I know it's hurt him bad, but I lost some real good friends too. Some wounded, legs blown away, some killed, just wiped off the face of the earth. And you think what we got: a pile of ammo, a lot of guns.

"I don't know. Was it worth it?"

From Cambodia



"HOMEWARD BOUND" FOR VIETNAM, U.S. SOLDIERS CHEER
Members of the First Air Cavalry show their joy as copter takes them from Cambodia

—UPI Photo