

Everything But Real

ANG WINTER MANEUVER EXCITING

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By TIM BRADNER

It was a good war, as wars go. It was fast-moving, exciting and, best of all, it wasn't real.

There was no official winner in the Alaska Army National Guard's winter maneuver, exercise "Kool Kat," but scouts from Company A of the Guard's Second Scout Battalion clearly felt they had gotten the upper hand.

Scouts from Akiak, Akiachak, Kwethluk and Tuluksak, under the direction of 2LT Nelson Jasper from Akiachak, worked alongside the Alaska Guard's 38th Special Forces Det. from Gambell and Anchorage in the four-day maneuver held last week on the Ft. Richardson military reservation north of Anchorage.

Together, they were split into three 30-man "guerrilla" combat teams and pitted against the Alaska Guard's Third Battalion (Mechanized), with over 500 men from Ketchikan, Sitka, Kodiak, Kenai and Anchorage. The battalion was further reinforced by the Guard's 910th Engineer Co., from Juneau and Fairbanks.

"Kool Kat" was a free-play maneuver, which meant that almost anything could go short of actual combat between Guard units competing in the exercise. The "war" began Sunday, a week ago (Feb. 28). Guard Green Beret troops, with the Gambell detachment under the command of Capt. Leonard Apangalook from Gambell, had parachuted into the maneuver area the night before, and were met by Lt. Jasper's scouts.

For the next four days they would harass and stalk the big Third Battalion, striking in fast hit-and-run attacks at night, setting ambushes and evading the "enemy" in well-hidden hideouts while the battalion, in turn, searched for them.

The scouts and Green Berets used classic guerrilla tactics; they worked on foot, using only rifles and dummy hand grenades, and ate C-rations. The battalion, on the other hand, is a conventional infantry battalion equipped with armored personnel carriers, machine guns, mortars, recoilless rifles and infrared scopes for "seeing" at night.

Blanks were used instead of bullets in rifles and machine guns. Colored smoke was used to lay smoke-screens and to simulate chemical attacks. "Grenades" were devices with the weight and feel of real hand grenades, but which "popped" and sparked like firecrackers.

Opposing troops were never allowed to come into physical contact with each other; neutral umpires watched the play, keep-

ing it from becoming too real, and scoring engagements as to "killed," "wounded," and who won the battle.

The battalion, in searching for hidden scouts and Green Berets, also enjoyed the services of Army UH-1D "Huey" helicopters, performing Vietnam-style troop lifts, resupply and reconnaissance.

"We know how the Vietcong must feel, now" said PFC Chet Clark, a Company A scout from the Tuluksak unit.

"Those helicopters were always around, looking for us just over the treetops. We had to be careful in crossing open areas and in willow patches, where they could see us and call in the Third Battalion. As soon as we heard a chopper coming we'd make it for a spruce clump. Under snow-covered spruce branches, they couldn't see us."

The "guerrillas" hid themselves well. Many helicopter pilots didn't see a single scout as they scoured the area for four days, while in reality the over-white-clad scouts were always right below, watching.

One spectacular night battle took place just as two important visitors, Deputy Chief of the National Guard Bureau Maj. Gen. Francis S. Greenlief, and Alaska's Assistant Adjutant General (Army) Brig. Gen. C. E. Reid, were watching.

The "guerrillas" were receiving air-dropped supplies late at night. They had placed their parachute recovery team directly on the drip-zone with an added security team hidden in the brush nearby.

A second security team, who were to guard a road entrance to the drop-zone area, were late in arriving because the drop-area had been changed at the last minute, requiring them to cover a fair stretch of distance on foot to reach the new drop-zone.

The Third Battalion's Company B, meanwhile, had somehow been tipped off to the location of the drop.

As the Air National Guard C-123 swooped in low out of the night sky to drop the supplies, three B Co. armored personnel carriers loaded with troops were hidden in the brush down the road.

PFC Clark played an important part in the engagement. Assigned to the scout supply-recovery team at first, Clark had injured his leg from falling off a hill earlier in the evening.

Injured, he was left on top of a hill overlooking the drop-zone and scene of the subsequent battle, to meet the late-arriving security team.

Clark was quietly waiting when he heard voices and saw moving shapes in the darkness. He challenged them, "but suddenly two to three of these guys grabbed me. They were the 'enemy,'" he recalls.

This was the observation team for the B Co. group. As soon as the signal-lights were lighted for the incoming aircraft, these men would ignite star-cluster signals to order the attack.

Captured, Clark was left with one man guarding him while the other two went on down the hill to set up the flares. While waiting, Clark distracted his guard and got away, taking the guard's rifle with him.

"I yelled 'ambush' to try to warn our guys on the drop-zone. I guess they didn't hear me."

The plane came in, dropped the supplies and B Company's star-clusters went shooting into the sky. On the hill, Clark could see the "enemy" tracked carriers roaring down the road.

"It was quite a battle. There were flares all over the place, and it was bright as day," Clark recalls.

"When those flares went off, our guys on the drop-zone grabbed the supplies and took off. By the time the armored carriers reached the zone, just a minute or two later, they had covered over a hundred yards, running for a hill. I don't know how those guys moved so fast."

The carriers stopped, disgorged their troops, and then roared on after the scouts. They came up the hill until steep grades stopped them, as the scouts scrambled on up above.

It was then that the late-arriving second security team arrived, on top of the same hill. They opened up with automatic rifles and grenades on the carriers and B Co. troops moving on the exposed and well-lighted valley below.

"It was as if there were an entire army on top of that hill, firing down on those guys. It was quite a sight," Clark described.

As he watched the battle, Clark was grabbed from behind by the same "enemy" troops. This time they tied his arms and legs with shoe-laces, but Clark managed to squirm out of his bindings and make a break once again.

"If my leg hadn't been hurt, I could have easily have outrun those three guys, but I couldn't."

Captured for the third time, he was taken down off the hill and lined up with the other scouts captured in front of a personnel carrier. As Gen. Greenlief and Gen. Reid walked by blocking the view of two guards, Clark escaped again and ran a quarter of a mile before pursuing guards once again brought him down.

This time the guards tied his arms with tape, as well as other scouts. But riding back to B Co. camp inside the carrier, Clark managed to free his arms and then untied everyone else in the carrier.

"We were going to make a break for it as soon as they opened the doors," he explained, "but on arriving, there were just too many of them waiting right outside the door."

The scouts were hardly model prisoners for B Co. that night. Among other things, they played a transistor radio so loud that it kept B Co. troops in nearby tents from sleeping that night.

The "war" was over last Thursday, and by Friday and Saturday Company A scouts and Gambell Green Berets were flying back home.



MOVING OUT—Leading a weapons platoon out of an armored personnel carrier which has made contact with the "enemy" are, left to right, Sp4 Edward Greenhalgh, Sgt. David Gunderson and SSG James Malone, all of Kenai.



PRISONERS—Two scout "prisoners" taking during one spectacular night battle are questioned by Maj. Gen. Francis Greenlief, deputy chief of the National Guard Bureau in Washington, D.C., shown at left.



LOOKING FOR SCOUTS—Three Third Battalion troops pause during a patrol to plot movements of Scout guerrillas, for whom they were searching.



ZEROING IN—PFC Rockwell Smith of Kenai, a gunner in a 106-millimeter recoilless rifle section, zeros in.
—All Guard Photos by 134th PI Det.