

A Company, 70th Engr Bn (Cbt)(A) went for five months without a reportable  
a accident and then, to use a well worn cliché, the bottom fell out.

A Company was assisting the 864th Engr Bn (const) in dismantling a no longer used compound which had belonged to C Company, 864th Engr Bn (Const), and was located near the town of Buon Ea Thi on QL 21.

Work had been going smoothly in the compound for five days and all the large structures had been dismantled. In dismantling the bunkers, a problem was encountered. The bunkers had a thick layer of sandbags and dirt on the roof which was very difficult to remove. A Gradall was brought in, but was unable to remove the material from the roof without destroying the bunker in the process. A system was then initiated whereby a dozer would remove all sandbags and earth from around the bunker and then the men would go in and remove all siding and non-structural material. The dozer would then push the bunker and collapse it. This system had worked successfully on three bunkers and work was in progress on the fourth and fifth bunkers.

At approximately 2:30 p.m. on 4 October, six men from A Company were working inside a bunker removing siding when the bunker suddenly collapsed on them. According to witnesses, the men had almost all the siding removed when there occurred a loud cracking sound followed almost immediately by the collapse of the bunker. There was no warning what-so-ever. Work was begun immediately to free the six men with additional help coming from the MACV compound located at Buon Ea Thi. It took almost one and a half hours to get all six men out due to the lack of proper equipment at the site at the time of the accident. The toll was three dead and three injured. One man was killed instantly, one man lived for about one half hour, and one man lived for almost one and one half hours after the accident occurred. Of the three injured, one man lost his right leg, the other two have fractured pelvises plus possible internal injuries. A dustoff was

reportedly called at approximately 2:45 p.m., but it didn't arrive at the accident scene until approximately 4:05 p.m.. The dead were listed as SP4 George C. Davenport, PFC Wayne R. Elkins, and PFC William F. McLaughlin. The injured are SP4 David J. Holland, PFC William H. Bell Jr., and PFC Ben E. Gordon.

SP4 Peter D Schmitt