

**Volume 14**

**Number 015**

**The Last Full Measure – Cu Chi**

**Tunnels of Vietnam – I (15)**

**Lead: For 400 years service men and women have fought to carve out and defend freedom and the civilization we know as America. This series on *A Moment in Time* (is presented by the people of \_\_\_\_\_ and) is devoted to the memory of those warriors, whose sacrifice gave, in the words of Lincoln at Gettysburg, *the last full measure*.**

**Content: Connecting Phnom Penh, Cambodia to Ho Chi Minh City, formerly Saigon, Highway Number One meanders along the coastline of Vietnam until it reaches Hanoi in the**

north. Just few miles west of the former capital of the South, the highway bisects one of the most contested provinces of the two wars for Vietnam. Cu Chi province lies on the piedmont or Mekong terrace, between the dry foothills of the central highlands and the rich swampy rice fields of the Mekong Delta. One of the few places in South Vietnam where troops and armor could operate nearly all year long, it was like a dagger pointed at the heart of the South's nerve center.

All sides in the wars recognized its importance and bitterly fought to control Cu Chi. Perhaps authors Mangold and Penycate do not exaggerate when they assert that Cu

**Chi “became the most bombed, shelled, gassed, defoliated, and generally devastated area in the history of warfare.” It became the focus of so much carnage, in part, because it was southern terminus of the Ho Chi Minh Trail.**

**To prosecute its war against the French and then the Americans and the non-communists, the North caused thousands of troops and endless tons of matériel to be trucked, biked, walked and carried down the spine of the central mountains and deposited into one of the truly phenomenal constructs of modern warfare, the Cu Chi Tunnels.**

**These underground passages**

**developed over the years as the defensive response of a native guerrilla army with meager equipment facing two of the richest and most technologically sophisticated enemies on earth. Their solution: dig for it. The tunnels of Cu Chi were a marvel of innovation with multiple levels, barracks, kitchens, hospitals, supply dumps, all artfully concealed and vigorously defended. By the time the Americans came on the scene in force in 1965, the tunnels stretched 200 kilometers in all directions beneath the hardpan of Cu Chi province. Next time: tunnel rats.**

**Research assistance by Tenzin Tsayang, at the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.**

## Resources

**Havely, Joe. “Cu Chi: The underground war.” *BBC News Asia Pacific*. 25 Apr. 2000. BBC.**

**Mangold, Tom, and John Penycate. *The Tunnels of Cu Chi*. New York City: Random House New York, 1985.**

**Mydans, Seth. “Cu Chi Journal; Visit the Vietcong’s World: Americans Welcome.” *The New York Times*. 7 July 1999.**

**<http://www.richmond.edu/~ebolt/history398/WarInTheVilagesAndTunnels.html>**

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