



**9TH INFANTRY
DIVISION**



50TH INFANTRY



"E" COMPANY



**SERGEANT
FIRST CLASS**



INFANTRYMAN

KENNETH RAY LANCASTER

"E" Company (Long Range Patrol), 50th Infantry, 9th Infantry Division
E4, Promotion to Staff Sergeant E6 while missing
Promotion to SFC when declared Dead in March of 1978, US219424079, MOS 11B40
Home of Record: Silver Spring, MD
Date of Birth: June 24, 1946, Age at time of loss: 21, Single
9th Infantry Division, Khanh Hoa Province, Republic of Vietnam
Start of Tour: October 17, 1967, Incident Date: January 3, 1968
Date declared Casualty: March 6, 1978, Days in Country: 98
Hostile, Air Crew Loss over Land, died while missing, Panel 33E - Row 029

Specialist Kenneth "Kenny" Lancaster, a new arrival to Vietnam and the 9th Infantry Division in Mid October, 1967, had volunteered for the division's LRRP unit in early November. With the activation of Company E (Long Range Patrol), 50th Infantry on December 20th, the LRRP unit was absorbed into the new designation. New company volunteers were sent periodically to the MACV Recondo School at Nha Trang. In a bizarre twist of fate, Company E suffered its first loss at that location in Khanh Hoa Province, 300 miles north of the 9th Infantry Division area of operations.



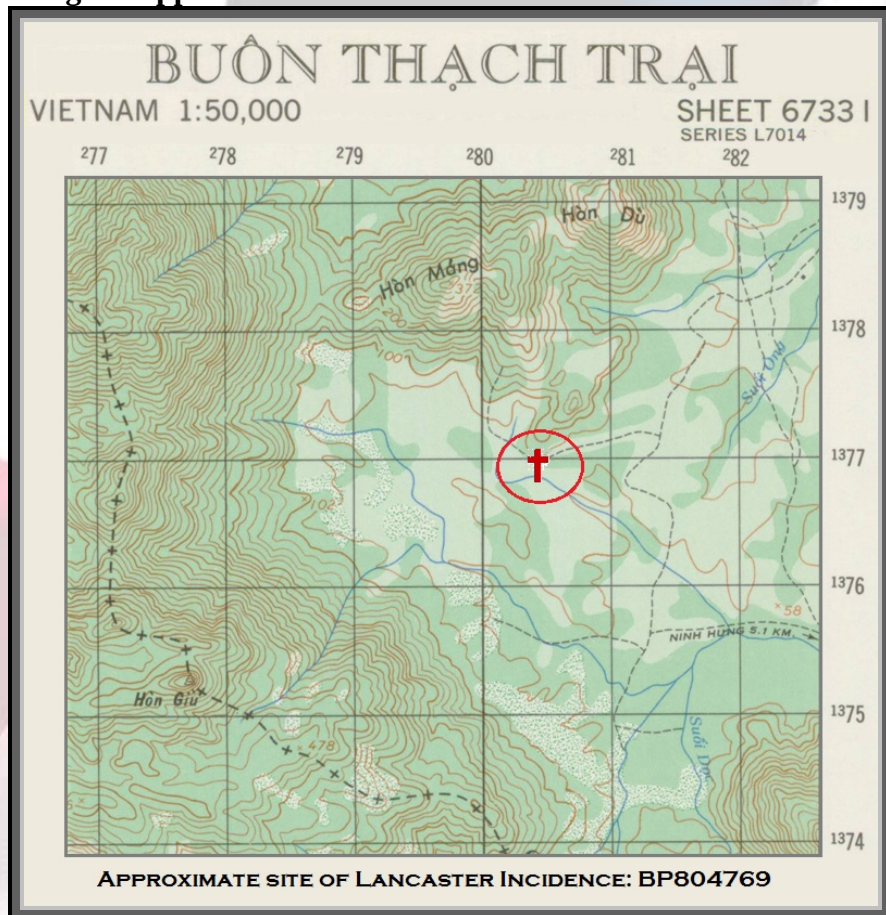
During January of 1968, Lancaster was a student at the MACV Recondo School and part of a training patrol advised by Korean liaison officer LT. Chi Keun Hong and led by experienced Special Forces Sergeant First Class Jason T. Woodworth. The final patrols of the MACV Recondo School were routinely sent into hostile areas to give students realistic battlefield experience. On 3 January 1968, SFC Woodworth's student team 3 was completing its last phase of instruction. That morning the school operations section received a radio transmission from the training patrol, requesting extraction because its position had been compromised by a firefight earlier that morning. The first helicopter going in to pick up the team received a round that hit their rotor blade and was sent back to base. The second helicopter hovered at the designated pickup point and all members of the team except Specialists Lancaster and Kozach were able to climb aboard. After waiting for two minutes over the landing zone the aircraft took off. Specialist Kozach stayed at the clearing and waited for another helicopter, but Specialist Lancaster grabbed the starboard skid in desperation and tried to hang on. The crew did not see him until the aircraft reached a 1,000-foot altitude when a member of the team saw SP4 Lancaster hanging onto the right skid of the helicopter as it continued to gain altitude. The pilot was informed and requested to land. When it became evident that the pilot was not able to land due to rough terrain, immediate efforts were made to lower a rope. However, before the rescue attempt could be made, Lancaster fell from the skid of the aircraft while the helicopter was at an altitude of 1000 to 1500 feet above the ground.

The area in which Lancaster fell had heavy vegetation and a triple canopy jungle, creating an extremely slim possibility that the trees and heavy vegetation could have broken his fall. Immediately search and rescue (SAR) efforts were initiated. The area of loss was searched visually from the air that day, then again on 7 and 8 January by American and indigenous platoons on the ground. Unfortunately, a thorough search of the area was limited because the exact location of loss could not be pinpointed.

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The dense jungle and heavy enemy activity further hampered the SAR effort. Regardless of these restrictions, US intelligence believed there was a high probability that the communists knew the fate of SP4 Lancaster, and could account for him whether he was alive or dead. When no trace of the team leader could be found, Kenneth Lancaster was listed Missing in Action. On March 3rd, 1978, Kenneth Ray Lancaster of Silver Spring, Maryland was declared a casualty of the Vietnam War. His body was never recovered and he remains listed as "Missing".¹

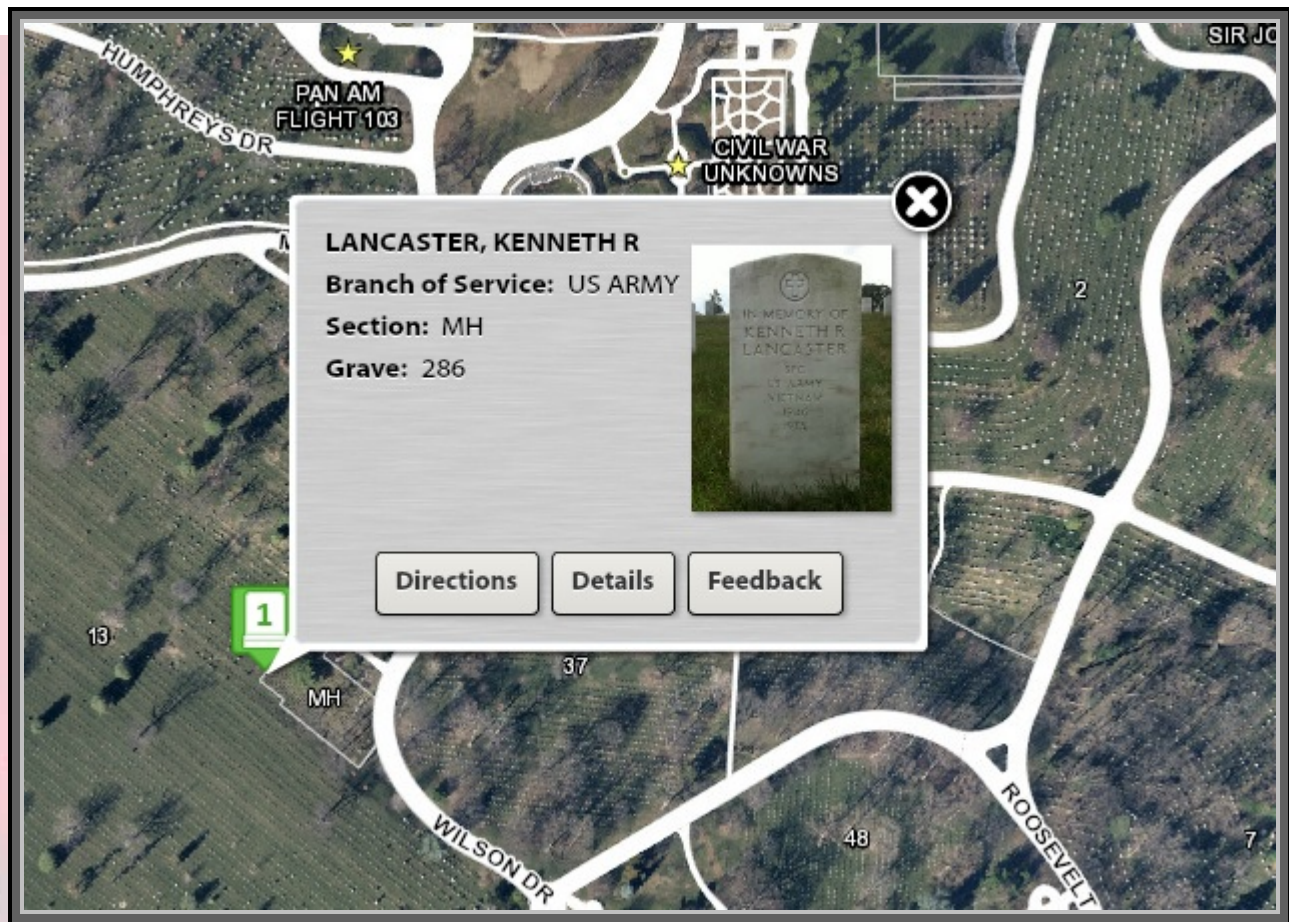
During the period between the incident and the declaration of Casualty status, Lancaster was promoted to Staff Sergeant, E6. In March of 1978, his status was changed to "Dead" and he was promoted to Sergeant First Class. A map showing the approximate area of the incident is shown below:



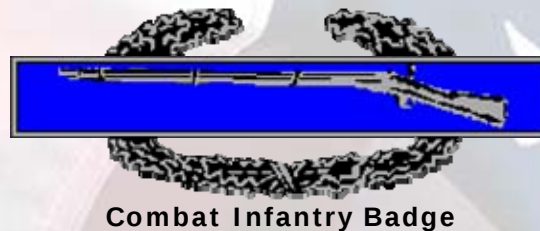
Kenneth Lancaster is buried at Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, VA., Section MH, Grave 286.



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AWARDS AND DECORATIONS OF KENNETH R. LANCASTER:



1. Compiled from the following sources: "Rangers at War", Shelby Stanton; USARV Investigation Report dtd 12 Jan 1968, DA MIA Board dtd 24 Mar 1971, Find-a grave, bio by Karen Hopkins; <http://www.taskforceomegainc.org/L005.htm>