

HANKS
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Three Engineer units have combined their efforts to lay an asphalt surface on Ban Me Thuot's only link with commerce centers to the east. When completed the two lane highway will furnish both military and civilian traffic with a line of communication providing comfortable and speedy transportation previously unknown on the rocky QL21.

The 610th Engr Co. (CS), commanded by Acting C O, 1LT Paul Schniederhand, recently arrived at their new compound near Khanh Duong to manufacture the basic ingredients used in asphalt highway construction. Attached to the 864th Engr Bn (Const), soldiers of the 610th daily use generous quantities of C-4 explosives to blast rock from nearby hills. The rock is hauled to the engineers' rock crusher where it is reduced to diameters of approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ inch, $\frac{3}{4}$ inch, and fines. Conveyor belts carry the rock into the continuous mix asphalt plant made by the Barber Green Co. The fire-breathing asphalt plant combines the rock with PA-3 to produce the mixture that will later become the actual surface of the road. Directing operation of the asphalt plant is 1LT Thomas Godell. In reference to getting the plant into operation ^{he} said, "We were able to produce asphalt only 30 days after construction on the plant site was begun. At present we are dispensing 300 to 400 tons of asphalt a day and will shortly be manufacturing 1000 tons a day." The plant was set up in a short period of time even though a personnel shortage allowed only 6 to 8 men to construct it.

While the 610th is busy with asphalt manufacture, men of the 131st Engr Co (LE) under the command of Cpt John Andrews are preparing the surface of the right-of-way to receive the hot asphalt. 1LT Steve Labombard explains, "Our part of the project involves the grading, wetting, compacting and shooting of the surface with MC-70 in final preparation for the asphalt." The 131st is presently attached to the 70th Engr Bn (Cbt) and can be easily identified on the job using their new

Bright yellow MCA equipment. This machinery stands out in pleasant contrast to the standard OD military equipment.

The final laying of the asphalt surface is really a three unit operation. Dump trucks from Alpha Co, 70th Engr Bn (Cbt), commanded by Cpt John Rice, haul loads of hot asphalt to the work site where asphalt spreaders of the 610th Engr creep along the surface laying the final topping to the road. As 131st and 610th engineers bread down the asphalt with heavy rollers, combat engineers of Co A, provide traffic control, road security, and a rake and shovel crew to assist the paving operation. Co A also maintains passable conditions on the unpaved section of QL21 by filling potholes and performing general repair work. 1LT Harrison OIG of the A Co road crew states, "We do the rake and shovel work. It may not be as glamorous a job as the other units have, but its all part of a combined effort to get asphalt on QL21."

The paving operations were begun on 16 April at Bridge 24 on the outskirts of Khanh Duong and have progressed to the point where local Lambretta drivers can putt-putt along for 1100 meters before having to brace themselves for the bone-jarring ride on the "old" QL21. In the near future a journey on QL21 will become a pleasurable experience rather than an ordeal thanks to the efforts of Army Engineers in this Central Highlands area.