

Big Job Falls To Little Guy

DUC PHO, (101st ABN-IO) -

Private First Class Marco Vega is a tunnel rat.

His job qualifications are excellent. He's five-foot-two, weighs 130 pounds, and carries the courage of any other trooper of Company B, 1st Battalion, 327th Infantry, 101st Airborne Division.

Most tunnels are so small that even Vega has a hard time moving in them.

"An M-16 is too big to carry into these small tunnels," said Vega. "I think the ideal weapon is a .22 cal. pistol with a silencer, but I just go in with a flashlight or matches."

If contact with the enemy is made, he hustles out and tosses in a grenade.

Most tunnels take from 15 to 30 minutes to check properly," explained Vega. "One day I was really busy. I had to check a complex of 50 rooms before nightfall."

"But I enjoy my work. And it pays off in enemy souvenirs," said Vega.

"In one tunnel I removed 50 satchels of nitric starch, Charlie's favorite explosive. I also found more than 100 yards of black silk for uniforms, a box of camouflage hats, and enough ponchos for 100 men."