

HEADQUARTERS
2D BATTALION, 7TH CAVALRY
1ST CAVALRY DIVISION (AIRMOBILE)
APO SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA, 96490

AVCIK-SA

24 November 1965

SUBJECT: After Action Report - OPERATION SILVER BAYONET-12-21 November 1965

TO: Commanding Officer
3d Bde, 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile)

1. ACTIVITY FOR THE PERIOD - 12-21 November 1965

a. 2/7 Cav was initially assigned the mission of securing LZ's and conducting search and clear operations in the vicinity of Chu Don Mountain, also ten kilometers south east of Plei Me. LZ's were selected at ATLANTA (ZV178919), BIRMINGHAM (ZV181921), and CHARLESTON (ZV195912).

The battalion began its move by air from AN KHE airstrip at 120630 November. Using four CV-2's and eventually two C-123's. The Battalion closed into STADIUM, south of Plei Kue at 1230. The move from STADIUM to the operational area began at 1145, with the lift-off of Co A and the reconnaissance platoon for LZ ATLANTA. An air strike at the base of the mountain began at 1140 and was terminated about two minutes before the landing of the initial elements. As soon as the aircraft could make the return trip, Co B moved to LZ BIRMINGHAM and Co C moved to LZ CHARLESTON. The lift was complete at 1545, and at 1600 Co C moved out to the last, stopping for the night at 1735. Btry B, 1/17 Arty set up at LZ ATLANTA in order to provide fire support in the battalion's area of operation.

On 13 November, Co B moved out at 0400 along axis LEMON, across the northern slopes of Chu Don Mountain. At 0600 Co C moved out on axis GRAPE, south of the mountain. Both companies were using as an objective assembly area DECATUR (ZV840962). The plan called for the entire battalion to re-assemble in this area to prepare for further operations to the east. Five phase lines were designated along readily identifiable terrain features about 1500 meters apart. By mid-morning it became apparent that the terrain along axis GRAPE permitted movement at a rate of approximately 1000 meters per hour, while that along axis LEMON restricted movement to a rate of not more than 300 meters per hour. Therefore, at 1230, Co C was ordered to turn north around the eastern end of the mountain and move to a position on axis LEMON. Meanwhile, Co A conducted reconnaissance patrols to the west and south and the reconnaissance platoon used three LZ's to conduct short air-foot patrols north of Chu Don Mountain. There was no contact.

At 1427 the command helicopter radioed that it had received fire at ZV164998. A check was made with brigade and with 1/7 Cav, who both reported no friendly troops at that location. The AT platoon was organized as a reaction force and left LZ ATLANTA by helicopter to attack the position from which the fire had come. The platoon landed at 1640 following a short artillery and ARA preparation. Once on the ground, the platoon sergeant reported that friendly troops were in the area. The unit was a company of 1/7 Cav, and had two men slightly wounded. While these men were being evacuated and the AT platoon was being extracted, the command helicopter again drew fire from ZV 163965 at 1702. At 1740 artillery fire was brought in on that location. Results were unknown.

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During the night Co A set up two ambushes near LZ ATLANTA. Co B spent the night at ZV912248 and Co C at ZV972250. At 1950 a report was received from 3d Brigade S-2 that an infiltration route had been discovered north of the mountain, and Co C was given the mission of setting up ambushes along that route during the next day.

On 14 November B and C companies continued their sweeping mission north of Chu Don Mountain. The reconnaissance platoon and AT platoon conducted patrols near ATLANTA. The only results of these patrols were storage huts destroyed at ZV120893 and a 400 meter square field of punji stakes discovered at ZV148923. Co A remained in reserve, securing LZ ATLANTA. At 1200 an air strike was made in the area from which the command helicopter had drawn fire the previous day. Results were unknown.

Co B was designated to return to STADIUM to act as a security force, and by 1155 had arrived at PZ which required extensive clearing before it could be used. Extraction began at 1330, and two platoons had been moved to STADIUM when 3d Bde ordered 2/7 Cav to attach Co B to 1/7 Cav, then heavily engaged with the enemy at LZ X-RAY (YA940010). The company (-) moved directly to LZ X-RAY, and by 1900 the entire company had closed into that location.

Co C was designated as security force at STADIUM, and was picked up by CH-47, the last lift clearing the PZ at 1714. During the night, Co A established an ambush north of LZ ATLANTA.

At 150730 November, Co A was attached to 1/7 Cav, and by 0900 had completed its lift-off for X-RAY. The battalion (-) was ordered to move by air to LZ MACON (YA935052), and by 1305 had closed into that location. The plan called for Btry B, 1/21 artillery, to move into the LZ, Co A, 1/5

Cav to relieve 2/7 Cav (-) and the battalion to proceed on foot south to the La Trang River, cross, and establish a position on the south bank. However, the LZ was too marshy to provide a suitable position for artillery, so the battery displaced to LZ COLUMBUS (YA974036). At 1445 the battalion (-) moved out, and reached the river after about one hour of marching. The river was found to be unfordable, and the battalion (-) was then ordered to proceed by air to LZ COLUMBUS. A suitable PZ was found about 400 meters north of the river, and the battalion (-) closed into LZ COLUMBUS at 1830.

LZ COLUMBUS had been secured by the reconnaissance platoon at 1540, and Co A, 1/5 Cav had been directed there from LZ MACON. Sufficient aircraft were not available to move Co D (-) and the headquarters elements other than the command group, so they were forced to spend another night at LZ ATLANTA under the command of the battalion executive officer. Co A, 1/5 Cav, was attached to the battalion, and the night was spent in providing security for LZ COLUMBUS.

Between 0350 and 0700 on 16 November, Co B, with the 3d platoon of Co A attached, repulsed continuous attack by PAVN battalion around LZ X-RAY. At 0400 the battalion (-) received an order to move to LZ X-RAY and relieve the 1/7 Cav. At 0615 the battalion (-) moved out on foot, and reached LZ X-RAY at 0916. No enemy activity was encountered, but one man in Co C was wounded by AP.

At 1800, the last elements of 1/7 Cav, with Co B and 3d Plt, Co A, still attached, cleared LZ X-Ray by air for Camp Halloway. At 1800 Co D (-) and the headquarters elements that had been left at LZ ATLANTA arrived to rejoin the battalion. During the night the battalion, with the 2/5 Cav remained in a defensive position around the LZ.

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Every activity was limited to sniper fire and a few artillery or mortar rounds fired into Co G's position.

At 171000 November, 2/5 Cav moved out on foot for LZ COLUMBUS. 2/7 Cav followed directly behind it, with its destination LZ ALBANY (YA945043). After proceeding about 2000 meters, the battalion turned northwest in order to reach LZ ALBANY, and about 200 meters short of the LZ the lead elements in the column took two prisoners without any resistance. Under questioning, these two men said that they were sick and had no further desire to fight. One said that he was from the 35 Regt and the other said that he was from the 180 Regt. In view of later developments, it appears that these two men were an outpost of an enemy force occupying an assembly area.

At 1307 the recon platoon attached to A Co, which was short of the platoon which had accompanied the 1/7 Cav and B Co 2/7 from X-Ray the previous day, had cleared thru the western edge of the objective area LZ sites. Along with 2 platoons of A Co which were to the south & north respectively of LZ ALBANY. The remainder of the battalion was in dispersed column to the east of the objective area, C Co 2/7, D 2/7, Hq's elements of 2/7 & A Co 1/5. As the units were moving into the ALBANY LZ area to take up positions small arms fire from ant hills & trees commenced. All personnel began to return fire at the well concealed enemy positions. The intensity of the enemy fire increased & enemy mortar fire began. Individuals and small units returned the fire and as the intensity of the enemy fire increased units attempted to consolidate to increase effectiveness of their fire & reduce confusion caused by all around enemy fire. It soon became apparent that the battalion had encountered a large, well dispersed & well concealed enemy force. C Co & D Co were subjected to intense flanking automatic weapons fire as well as mortar fire. C Co attempted to move westward to join the forward units around the LZ area but were unsuccessful due to the intensity & accuracy of enemy fire which killed or wounded almost all the officer and NCO leaders in the company. D Co & Hq's elements were forced to move toward the southeast to link up with A 1/5 Cav which had suffered heavy casualties in its lead elements. Continuing mortar & automatic weapons fire prevented these units from linking up with the elements at the LZ area. The enemy then closed between the 2 elements and continued to fire on both simultaneously. The elements of C, D, Hq's & A 1/5 were dispersed in terrain heavily grassed & forested & exact locations of these elements was difficult to determine so that Artillery, Air Force & ARA fire could be placed on enemy locations. After approximate locations of friendly elements had been determined, ARA was brought in, followed by an air strike. The initial air strike delivered napalm on an enemy company in process of attacking the command group from the western flanks. The napalm was dropped within 100 yds of the friendly troops. Some of the enemy broke into the open and were killed by small arms fire, while others withdrew. Sniping & automatic fire were exchanged between friendly forces on the eastern side of the LZ and enemy forces across a small field to the east continued until friendly artillery & ARA fire began to fall in the area. Enemy fire gradually slackened, and ceased about 1600. At 1625, Co B rejoined the battalion, landing in UH1D's. The aircraft received automatic fire while airborne, but none was seriously damaged.

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The arrival of B Co increased the force in the ~~Western~~ perimeter (A 1/5 Cav and 2/7 Cav elements formed a perimeter approximately 500-700 meters to the southeast) to 190 personnel. A perimeter was formed which covered the LZ & the open field to the east. Artillery & Air strikes were continuously ringing the LZ and perimeter to prevent the enemy from organizing a counter attack. Illumination from Smoky Bear was provided throughout the night and greatly facilitated defense of the area. At approximately 2400 hours 2 UH3D aircraft from C Co 229th AH Bn were brought into the LZ to evacuate 10 of the most serious casualties as well as deliver MG ammunition. Other aircraft were brought into an LZ in the A 1/5 Cav area for evacuation of their serious casualties.

One platoon of C Co 2/7, 21 men, all wounded, formed a small perimeter isolated from the 2 larger ones earlier in the afternoon and was kept secure by close in Artillery fire. At approximately 2200 hours a patrol from A 1/5 Cav made contact with this platoon and evacuated the most serious casualties as well as leaving additional force with them to insure security of the group as it was impossible to evacuate all the casualties at that time.

During the night 2 wounded NCO's managed to evade the VC who had captured them and make their way to the Bn perimeter. Both were evacuated by above mentioned aircraft. They both indicated that the enemy had been badly hurt by both friendly ground & air fire during the day & that the force was a large one. They further indicated that the enemy was last located along the northern & western edge of the Bn perimeter. Continuous Air & Artillery fire was placed on these areas to prevent further enemy concentration.

During 18 November the battalion enlarged the LZ perimeter after linking up with elements previously cut-off. The battalion patrolled out from the perimeter & recovered dead and wounded personnel and friendly and enemy equipment and weapons. The intermingling of friendly and enemy dead, revealed that much of the action had taken place at point-blank range. It was also obvious that the enemy had attempted to kill friendly wounded and had looted some of their bodies. Co A, 1/5 Cav, reinforced with Co B, 2/5 Cav, arrived at the LZ at 180900 November and assisted in the work of reclamation. They returned to 1/5 Cav control for move eastward to LZ COLUMBUS at 1400 hours.

The enlarged perimeter was occupied for the night of 18 November by all elements of the 2/7. Supporting Artillery was located at LZ COLUMBUS to the east and LZ CROOKS to the west. The artillery at force CROOKS was firing at max range and only able to reach the southwest side of the battalion perimeter, with illuminating rounds, although the entire perimeter was covered by HE. The attack on LZ COLUMBUS diverted planned air strikes to that area & Smoky Bear Illumination was concentrated over COLUMBUS & CROOKS for most of the night. LZ ALBANY area was dimly illuminated throughout the night. An air strike was called on the eastern flank of the Battalion perimeter at 2400 hours to breakup any concentration of enemy which may have withdrawn westward from LZ COLUMBUS.

The morning of the 19th was spent in further recovery of dead & equipment. A tactical lift out of ALBANY was accomplished, the last element departing at 1340 hours, closing at LZ CROOKS at 1350 hours.

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The Battalion secured a portion of the LZ perimeter, with 2/5 Cav securing the remainder. During the night two mortar rounds fell on Co D's position, causing no casualties, but no other enemy activity was encountered.

At 201145 November the last elements of the battalion departed LZ CROOKS for Camp Halloway, where it remained overnight resting and preparing for the move back to AN KHE. At 211600 November the battalion departed Camp Halloway by road and arrived at AN KHE at 1830.

b. (1) Enemy casualties:

<u>Killed</u>	<u>Wounded</u>
303 (bc)	150 (est)
100 (bc)	

Friendly casualties:

<u>KIA</u>	<u>WIA</u>	<u>MEA</u>
119	124	8

(2) Captured Enemy Weapons: 33 LMG 7.62mm, 112 rifles 7.62mm, 5 mortar bipods, 4 mortar tubes 82mm, 2 mortar sights, 2 rocket launchers, 3 cases mortar fuzes, 3 HMG 7.62mm.

(3) Captured Enemy foodstuff, medical supplies, other materials 21 packs each containing rice ration for about five days.

(4) Enemy equipment destroyed: 4 rocket launchers, 6 LMG 7.62mm, 2 mortars 82mm, 100 rifles 7.62mm, 3 cases rocket launcher ammunition.

2. LESSONS LEARNED:

a. Operations on or near the edge of the battalion are of operation must be very carefully coordinated with neighboring units.

b. Back-pack radios must be camouflaged, as radio operators are prime targets of the enemy.

c. More attention must be paid to individual camouflage, to include use of camouflage stick.

d. At first contact with the enemy, certain man should be designated to spray all trees within range in order to flush out snipers.

e. Whenever possible a wedge or V - type formation should be used rather than a column.

f. Artillery preparation or air strikes should be delivered on any LZ just prior to its occupation by friendly forces.

g. Every leader, to include squad leaders, should carry at least one smoke grenade.

h. Every leader, at least down to platoon sergeant level, should have a compass and a map, and should always have his location accurately plotted.

i. Artillery should be used as an assist to land navigation.

j. All LZ's regardless of their size should be considered to be under the observation and fire by the enemy.

k. Trees must be used by friendly troops as ops as well as sniping position.

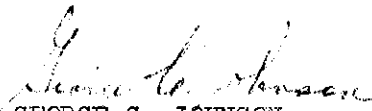
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3. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- a. A requirement exists for a ~~cross~~ streamer pyrotechnic signal for use in heavy woods.
- b. A requirement exists for a light weight antenna to replace the RC 292, which is too bulky and heavy.

FOR THE COMMANDER


GEORGE C. JOHNSON
Captain, Infantry
Adjutant