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 HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BRIGADE (SEPARATE)
 1ST CAVALRY DIVISION (AIRMOBILE)
 APO San Francisco 96490

AVDAGT-P

UNCLASSIFIED

27 November 1971

SUBJECT: After Action Report - Combat Operations by the 2nd Detachment, 5th Cavalry in the Dinh Quan Area, 17-25 November 1971

Commanding General
 Third Regional Assistance Command
 APO In Country 96375

1. (C) PURPOSE: This report is an analysis of actions undertaken by an airmobile infantry battalion during combat operations 17-25 Nov 71 near the border between Long Khanh and Binh Tuy Provinces in the vicinity of Dinh Quan, South Vietnam. It serves as an example of "dynamic defense" type operations. This report primarily covers those major actions taking place during the 2-5th Cav's contact with the enemy during the period 17-19 Nov 71; briefly depicts those events leading to that contact, and outlines subsequent operations.
2. (C) BACKGROUND: On 10 Nov two usually reliable source reports indicated the presence of a Regimental CP Associate in the area of YT617382 and YT647366. Terrain analysis revealed that the area bounded by YT6237, 6935, 6730, and 6230 would be an ideal base area due to the lack of open areas suitable for LZ's and the thick vegetation which consisted of double canopy jungle. US advisors and their ARVN counterparts at Dinh Quan and Vo Det stated that the area in question was being used and had been used in the past as an enemy transshipment area. To obtain first hand information on the area, Ranger Team 79 was inserted at YT664345 on 15 Nov. Thirty minutes after insertion the team found a north-south trail which indicated use by 10 individuals in the last eight hours. At 1730 hrs the team killed one individual moving south on the trail. The individual carried an SKS rifle, 5 lbs of fresh vegetables and one ounce of documents that identified him as a member of R76A Hospital. During debriefing the patrol leader felt there was significant enemy activity in the area and recommended continued friendly operations in the vicinity. To exploit the situation, the 2-5 Cav was inserted into the area by airmobile combat assault on 16 Nov.
3. (C) SEQUENCE OF EVENTS: a. 16 Nov - Co A, 2-5 Cav, conducts airmobile combat assault at 1100 hrs from YT503403 to YT652357 to conduct ground reconnaissance in the vicinity of Ranger Team 79's contact on 15 Nov.

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b. 17 Nov - Co D, 2-5th Cav conducts airmobile combat assault at 1250 hrs from YT574300 to YT654356 and commences ground reconnaissance (Incl 2,3 & 4). Late afternoon (1600 hrs) A Co at YT655346 locates a north-south logging road indicating heavy recent use, and shortly thereafter engages five individuals on top of a bunker at YT655345. This contact lasts for well over an hour with the enemy responding with heavy volume of small arms, B-40's, machine-gun fire and claymore mines; supporting OH-6A's and AH-1G's receive heavy ground to air fire. Just prior to darkness, A Co withdraws to the north and utilizes extensive field artillery fires (Incl 1) in an attempt to canalize and destroy the enemy.

c. 18 Nov - A and D Co's move south on the logging road approximately 200 meters apart. A Co locates previous day's contact site and reports it as deserted with evidence of blood trails leading south. At 1345 hrs, D Co, at YT655345, receives fire from enemy forces in a bunker complex 30 meters to their front. In the exchange, D Co suffers one killed and two wounded soldiers; OH-6A's, AH-1G's and MEDEVAC receive heavy fires with one OH-6A gunner receiving wounds in the arms and one MEDEVAC pilot a foot wound. D Co withdraws to A Co's location and MEDEVACS their wounded and dead. D Trp - 229 AHD, F Btry - 79 Arty, USAF aircraft, and 1-21st Arty support contact with heavy fires.

d. 19 Nov - OH-6A receives 15-20 rounds of ground to air fire during first light check; Dde conducts XM-150 CS drop and expends AH-1G CS rockets on the target area. The 2-5th Cav's recon platoon combat assaults at 1045 hrs from FOB Mace to YT654347 and links up with A Co. 3rd Dde conducts CH-47 napalm drop on six enemy bunkers in the contact area resulting in a large secondary explosion and destruction of six bunkers. VNAF supports operation with 9 sorties

e. 20 Nov - 2-5th Cav, after extensive 105/155mm and VNAF F-5 air support, moves into the area YT658347 from the northeast and finds bunkers deserted of enemy forces; confiscates documents, medical supplies, pith helmets, M-79 rounds, 1400 lbs flour, 450 lbs corn, and C-4 while searching over 100 bunkers and a 30 man dining area. Additional details are depicted in para 4b below.

f. 21-25 Nov - Thorough search of the area continues (Incl 4).

4. (C) HIGHLIGHTS: a. Extensive field artillery, aerial field artillery, and USAF and VNAF assets were utilized against the bunker complexes. Numerous munitions were employed to include delivery of CS by UH-1H and AH-1G and napalm by CH-47 helicopters (Incl 1). Aerial field artillery expended over 1100 ten lb rockets and over 600 seventeen lb rockets during the period 17-19 Nov 71. Field artillery supported with over 2400 HE 105mm rounds, 90 HE 155mm rounds, and 125 HE 8 inch shells during a five day period. VNAF F-5, 9 sorties and the 3rd Dde dropped over 700 gallons of napalm from CH-47's on the enemy. Strong indications are that these preparations severely injured the enemy and disrupted his plans; 3rd Dde casualties were minimized.

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b. The bunker complex covered an area 1000m X 200m and contained an estimated 100 bunkers, both living and fighting. The size varied from 8 x 5 ft to 10 x 15 ft with 3 ft of over head cover. The bunkers were in good condition ranging in age from 4 months to brand new; some were still under construction. The complex also included a training area (complete with obstacle course) and mock-ups of concertina wire entanglements, a classroom and mess hall. During the search of the bunkers a 100lb flour cache estimated to have been in place for two months was discovered. Only a small amount of documents were captured and no unit identification was determined. Other items captured included small amounts of medical supplies and clothing found in the bunkers and 450 lbs of corn found in the kitchen area. An agent reported on 19 Nov that he saw 90 individuals southeast of Dinh Quan carrying 17 wounded personnel and reported that 15 more were killed by air strike. At YR626318 on 19 Nov, Ranger Team 79 observed an unknown number of individuals carrying wounded personnel moving to the west. In the morning the Ranger Team confirmed this information by locating numerous blood trails to the west and northwest of their position. All indications pointed towards heavy enemy casualties, although no bodies were discovered in or near the complex. On 23 Nov at YR654348 (1 km east of the bunker complex) C Co, 2/5th Cav discovered a second complex consisting of 40 bunkers (33 were destroyed and 7 were in good condition) used in the last 48 hours. Search of this complex produced a "hard goods" cache consisting of 40 B-40 rounds which were in fair condition and estimated to have been in place approximately two months.

5. (C) CONCLUSION: a. The discovery of the hard and soft goods caches indicates the enemy had planned to use this area as a logistics base for operations in the Rice Bowl during the next few months. Although no positive enemy unit identifications have been made to date, the following circumstantial evidence suggests that the enemy force encountered in the bunker complex on 17 Nov was a Main Force unit. This unit was probably the 1st Bn, 33rd NVA Regiment.

(1) The enemy fought for two days employing large quantities of ammunition and withdrew only after his position became completely untenable. These actions are characteristic of a Main Force unit as opposed to a Local Force one.

(2) The bunker complexes are estimated to have been used by a battalion size force.

(3) The 33rd NVA Regiment has traditionally deployed one battalion to the Rice Bowl to support Local Force units in disrupting the harvest and collecting rice.

(4) PW reports, captured documents, and other intelligence sources indicate the 2nd Bn, 3rd Bn, and HQ of 33rd NVA Regiment are located south of QL.

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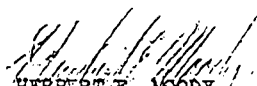
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(5) The absence of bodies and documents in the bunker complexes further indicates the presence of the 33rd NVA Regt as it is that unit's normal mode of operation to thoroughly police the battlefield.

b. Offensive operations by this airmobile battalion within the parameters of dynamic defense guidelines have greatly assisted the local Vietnamese forces in the Dinh Quan area. Since introduction of the 2/5th Cav in that area, enemy incidents have ceased.

c. The enemy suffered casualties and his current and future plans and timetables appear to have been disrupted.

FOR THE COMMANDER:


HERBERT E. MOODY
LTC, IN
Chief of Staff

INCLOSURES: 1 - Fire Support Expenditures
2 - General Area of Operations
3 - Bunker Complexes
4 - Direction of Company Advancements

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Form of Delivery	AERIAL FIELD ARTILLERY					FIELD ARTILLERY					A-37	GH-47	UH-1-D
	D TROOP, 229th AHB F BTRY, 79th ARTY					A/1/21 Nancy	A/1/21 Richie	A/5/42 Nancy	A/2/32 Richie	WAF	26th Chem	26th Chem	
Unit and Location	2/5 A/O					2/5 A/O	2/5 A/O	2/5 A/O	2/5 A/O	2/5 A/O	YT 653343	2/5 A/O	
Quantity Description	Rockets	Rockets	Fleche	CS	WP Smoke	105 MM	105 MM	155 MM	155 MM	8 In.	500 Bomb & Rkts	Napalm	CS Gas
Weight / Size	10 pounds	17 pounds				HE	HE	HE	Illum	HE	HE/ VT	55 Gal Drum	M-158 disp.
Time on Target											0900- 1200-Hrs	1300 Hrs	0730 Hrs
November 17	430	97				361			37				
November 18	499	383	50			630	449	173					10
November 19	174	121	54	70	67	492	173	255		72	9 Sorties	13 Drums/ 715 Gals.	
November 20						315	4	470		54			
November 21								52					
TOTAL	1103	601	104	70	67	1798	626	948	37	126	9 Sorties	13 Drums/ 715 Gals.	10

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Douglas Young
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NUMBER OF PAGES: 7

MESSAGE:

In response to your inquiry, attached, at no charge, are photocopies of "3rd Bde (sep) 1st Air Cav Div (Am) After Action Report, combat operations by the 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry, Dinh Quan area....." (DS 557.8 D 56 T47 1971a).

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