

BN After Action Rpt
OP CACTI

9/14/65

53 File

HEADQUARTERS
2d Bn (Abn) 502d Inf
APO San Francisco, Calif 96347

AJEAD-E

16 September 1965

SUBJECT: After Action Report, Operation CACTI

9/14/65

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TO: Commanding Officer
1st Bde, 101st Abn Div
APO US Forces, 96347

1. References:

- a. OPORD 20-65 (CACTI).
- b. Map Sheets, South Vietnam, 1:50,000, 6752I and 6753II.

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[Signature]

2. Background:

- a. The mission of operation CACTI was to conduct a search and destroy operation in the valley vic BR6752 (TINH BINH DINH Province).
- b. Intelligence reports beginning 17 August indicated that a Viet Cong Company was based in the area.

3. Operation:

a. The battalion (reinf) assembled in assembly area STRIKE prior to 1800 hrs on D-2 (12 Sept 65), and crossed the LD at 0600 the next morning. A and B Companies moved abreast on Axis SMITH, followed by C Company and B Troop of TF HANSEN (attached). During the movement, villagers were instructed to repair the obstacles which had been dug across the road (the road is now passable for a 3/4 ton truck).

b. A Company reported periodic sniper fire from the right flank between 1017 hrs and 1055 hrs. From 1107 - 1130 hrs, 106 recoilless rifle and artillery fire was placed upon a suspected enemy location across the river at BR 641532. The Tactical CP received periodic sniper fire from the right flank from 1155 hrs until 1230 hrs. At 1300 hrs an airborne FAC requested permission to unload ordnance on the suspected enemy location. Permission was granted and two (2) A1E Aircraft conducted a thirty (30) minute strike.

c. Lead elements crossed the Song Con River at 1500 hrs. Two mortar platoon Mules (M274s) were successfully floated across the river with air mattresses. The M151s with the Tactical CP were unable to ford the river. The rifle companies closed in assembly area HIT at 1635 hrs. The Tactical CP, AT Platoon, and B Troop remained in an assembly area on the west side of the river. At 1630 hrs, the 4.2 Mortar Platoon conducted a heliborne move from LZ RUN to the assembly area on the west side of the river. Water and C-rations were resupplied by helicopter to units in both assembly areas.

After Action Report, Operation CACTI (Cont)

d. On D-Day (14 Sept) the rifle companies began the move along AXIS BAKER to the objective area at 0200 hrs. B Troop crossed the river at 0300 hrs and moved to blocking position #1. At 0620 hrs, B Troop was in position and an ARVN Ranger Company and a CIDG Company (both attached) occupied blocking positions #2 and #3 respectively. The tactical CP, AT and Mortar Platoons displaced to BR639510 30 minutes after first light.

e. Enemy fire was not received during the search of the objective area. The mission was accomplished by 1410 hrs and elements began returning across the river. At 1800 hrs all elements had closed into assembly area STRIKE and the operation was terminated.

f. Approximately four (4) tons of rice and four hundred (400) lbs of salt were destroyed. Sixty-four personnel of military age were apprehended. One man was captured with a weapon. Two other weapons were discovered, as well as two stick type grenades. (See Inclosure 2, Intelligence Summary).

4. Lessons Learned:

a. On search operations, a tactical element should sweep through and secure the area. This element should be followed by squad or fire team search elements which accomplish the mission of searching.

b. Ropes should be carried when hasty river crossing may be anticipated.

c. The M274 is very adaptable to hasty river crossings. It may be carried across a waist deep river by ten (10) men with two poles. It may be floated across a deeper river with eight (8) air mattresses, four (4) ponchos, and sticks.

d. One unit should cross a river at the same point at one time.

e. Troops must keep moving when they reach the far bank of the river. The operation slows down considerably if they stop to adjust equipment on the far bank.

f. When POWs are extracted from the operational area by helicopter, careful accountability of their possessions should be insured.

g. The air-ground operations should be controlled on the admin/ log net. This reduces traffic on the command net and permits rapid response to company close air support and aerial resupply requests.

h. Enemy contact or signs of enemy activity are always found within several hundred yards of a stream or similar source of water.

i. Stay behind ambush patrols or observation elements can be seeded into built up areas, clearing a sweep without alerting the local populace.

INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY (OPERATION CACTI)

- 13 Sep 65
1. Blew tunnel at 636474
 2. Trenches and foxholes 4-5 months old at 646486
 3. Wounded POW at 644482
 4. 81mm Mortar containers were found at 646486
 5. 300# of rice were destroyed at 645491
 6. 4 POW's without weapons or documents were found at 647486
 7. Network of inner-connecting tunnels were found at 644493
 8. One POW w/out weapon or documents were found at 644493
 9. 600# of rice was destroyed at 642491, also found papers in haystack.
 10. Two POW's w/ID cards were found at 634455
 11. Rec'd 5 rounds of semi automatic fire from 636522
 12. POW claims he is Vietnamese agent allegedly reports seeing VC Bn of 3 Co's with 5 mortar (60mm), also reported guerrilla moved to 662508
 13. 96 cubic feet of rice at 434493 destroyed
 14. 50# of rice destroyed at 644487
 15. Roads have large holes (8'x28x3') across them. VC ordered people to dig these and told them to be prepared to evacuate their homes when American troops come. People are filling holes for us and we are attempting some civil affairs action with C-Rations cigarettes and interpreters explaining our position.
 16. Sniper fire semi automatic at 635520
 17. 4 POW's w/ID cards, 1 POW w/out at 634525 and 20# of rice at same location.
 18. 12 POW's w/out ID cards and weapons at 634525
 19. Semi Automatic sniper fire at 636522
 20. 30 bushels of salt destroyed at 637526
 21. RRU reported unknown station with chinese dialect.
 22. 1 POW at 638547, no weapon or documents.
 23. 300# of rice at 638549 was destroyed.

14 Sep 65

1. 4 VC suspects ran into brush at 667533
2. 200# of rice destroyed at 667534
3. Picked up possible VC with shrapnel wounds but still alive. Had 5,000 Piastres with card has N Vietnamese and Cambodian money picked up at 666531
4. Co sized campsite at 665530
5. 10 POWs w/out weapons at 654509
6. 1 POW at 662527 in hole with 19 rounds carbine, hammock, clothes, diary, wallet, 2 rucksacks and 2 grenades stick type. Bunders destroyed.
7. Young people in Tien Thuan (1) moved to Binh Ke area to escape from VC's. Elders won't move.
8. 2 tons of rice destroyed and medical supplies confiscated at 655528
9. Hut at 647529 with 200# of salt, 15# of peanuts, 2 five gallon cans of thickened fuel destroyed.
10. One ton rice destroyed 655527
11. POW captured w/wpn 664520. Two additional wpn's located same place.
12. 10 POW's evacuated to Brigade. POW's found as Bn moved thru valley at GS6651
13. POW interrogation showed POW w/wpn was on way to VC main force Co named Song Lam part of anti-aircraft unit. POW from Cat Thanh village, Phu Cat district Binh Dinh province. He was guerrilla for 4 months, 40 guerrillas from his area.
14. POW's have been policed up all along valley a total of 64 suspects taken to Brigade POW point.

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