

BN After Action Report  
OP JOHN PAUL JONES

7/19 - 9/5/66

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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
 HEADQUARTERS 2D BATTALION (AIRBORNE), 502D INFANTRY  
 APO SF 96347

AVED-CO

10 September 1966

SUBJECT: After Action Report, Operation JOHN PAUL JONES

TO: Commanding General  
 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division  
 ATTN: AVED-C  
 APO SF 96347

## 1. General:

- a. Name of Operation: JOHN PAUL JONES.
- b. Dates of Operation: 19 July 1966 to 5 September 1966.
- c. Location: PHU YEN Province.
- d. Control HQ: Hqs, 2d Bn (Abn), 502d Infantry.
- e. Reporting Officer: FRANK L. DIETRICH, LTC, Infantry.

2. Task Organization: The task organization is listed in 2/502d Infantry OPORDS 51-66, 56-66 and 57-66.

## 3. Supporting Forces:

a. Naval gunfire support was provided by one destroyer and one LSMR (rocket ship) of the U.S. 7th Fleet. On 241700H July the rocket ship provided a very effective pre-planned LZ preparation in conjunction with artillery fires. This LZ preparation was the most effective naval gunfire support this battalion has had to date. In addition, a naval gunfire LZ preparation was fired on 2 August during Phase II in support of an airmobile assault conducted by B Company.

b. Army aviation support was requested and utilized daily. On several occasions, especially during Phase V, requests for air support were made for immediate needs and changes in the tactical situation and were honored immediately and effectively. During Operation JOHN PAUL JONES seven battalion (-) moves and six separate company moves were accomplished in a timely and highly efficient manner.

c. Engineer support was required on several occasions to clear and improve LZ's. At times they were used in a combat infantry role and performed in a highly efficient manner.

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d. Tactical air was requested and used during Phase IV of the operation. The response was immediate and very effective.

e. Artillery was used throughout the operation. Several times artillery was used most effectively to block enemy routes of withdrawal until ground troops could be moved into blocking positions. At all times supporting artillery fires were timely and effective.

#### 4. Intelligence:

a. Phase I: The last friendly units to operate in the Vung Ro Bay area were elements of the 2/327th Infantry and 39th Engineers who were there in April and made no enemy contact. There were no indications of significant enemy activity at the time the 2/502d Infantry was committed. The 2/502d found no indications of significant VC activity in Vung Ro Bay area.

b. Phase II: The 2/502d Infantry exploited a B-52 raid which was planned on a suspected NVA base camp and a suspected battalion size unit location. No significant contact was made, nor were indications of VC activity found.

c. Phase III: The 2/502d Infantry was committed into an area through which elements of the 95th NVA Regiment might escape from sweep operation by 1/327th Infantry. Many disorganized NVA and VC troops were encountered. Enemy killed, documents, ID cards, and POW statements indicated the NVA were elements of the 561st NVA Artillery Battalion. Two 71B radios, one commercial radio, 120mm mortar references, and meteorological equipment were captured.

d. Phase IV: The 2/502d Infantry began execution of security mission vicinity TUY HOA South Airfield with indications that VC would step up terrorism, attempt grenade attack of the airfield, mine roads, and possibly mortar the 39th Engineers base camp. There were instances of sniping. Two VC were captured in a village sweep CQ 238348 on 21 August. On 28 August a sweep of the village at CQ 245341 was conducted to exploit agent reports that a VC platoon was operating there. No contact was made, but VC personnel roster and anti-American propaganda were found. In addition, villagers stated that 10 VC with weapons were in the village the night before. On 29 August a company (+) size sweep was conducted vicinity of CQ 1636, based on information that 30-40 VC had been cultivating the fields at that location for the past year. Four VC were contacted, one of which was hit and seen dragged away.

e. Phase V: Prior to this engagement, elements of the 18B Regiment were reportedly located in the vicinity of Van Hoa and fleeing south from converging free world forces. On 1 September, A Company found what is believed to be an enemy way station consisting of 15 huts at BQ 915515. Fortifications were found at BQ 933493 and BQ 926497. The latter were freshly dug and constructed. On 4 September, A Company had contact with an unknown size enemy force. As a result of the engagement 5 NVA were killed and 4 AK-47 rifles, 4 RPD machine guns, 1 SKS carbine, numerous hand grenades and small arms ammunition were captured. This action took place when A Company came upon an enemy battalion size base camp. The element engaged was believed to be of the 18B

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NVA Regiment. On 5 September, A Company captured one NVA soldier believed to be of the 18B NVA Regiment. Although there was evidence of enemy activity in the area, his troops were well dispersed and broken down into small elements. The enemy did not seem to be aggressive and eluded all contact. Indications are that his units have a great deal of disease and a shortage of food.

5. Mission: The 2d Battalion, 502d Infantry was given the following missions during the five phases of Operation JOHN PAUL JONES, as follows:

a. Phase I: 19 July through 30 July; TF 2/502 infiltrates Vung Ro Bay area, secure and hold LST sites at CQ 268226 and CQ 280230; clear rail-road tunnel vicinity CQ 265235; clear and secure Highway 1 from CQ 268220 to CQ 260242; seize and secure bridges along Highway 1 between CQ 263228 and CQ 256248.

b. Phase II: 2 August through 3 August, 2/502d Infantry exploit two B-52 strikes vicinity BQ 962912 and BQ 003863.

c. Phase III: 1 August through 15 August, 2/502d Infantry provides one company to secure A 2/320th Artillery vicinity BQ 787802 from 281320H August until relieved. 2/502d (-) on 30 minute alert to exploit any enemy contact.

d. Phase IV: 17 August through 30 August, 2/502d Infantry provides "Stay Behind" force in Ky Lo Valley for approximately 7 days; provides security for A 2/320th Artillery in AO for approximately 7 days, relieves 1st Battalion, 2d KMB on 17 August 1966; protects and defends the following:

(1) Bridges at coordinates CQ 182399, CQ 184393, CQ 201350, and CQ 225368.

(2) TUY HOA South Airfield vicinity CQ 200430 commencing 19 August 1966.

(3) Engineers work parties and Engineers clearing routes yellow and black of mines beginning at EMNT daily.

(4) On order provides security for Engineer work parties constructing 28th ROK Regiment base camp vicinity CQ 2635 and provides one rifle company for TF BRAVO.

e. Phase V: 30 August through 5 September, the 2/502d Infantry:

(1) Continued present mission of security TUY HOA South Airfield, bridges in AO vicinity coordinates CQ 182399; CQ 184393 and CQ 225368.

(2) Provided two rifle companies (+) to conduct search and destroy operations in Sector GEMINI in mutual cooperation with USSF Det A-221 (TASK FORCE MIKE).

3

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10 September 1966

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## 6. Concept of Operation:

a. Phase I: Company B infiltrates by airmobile assault on D-3 1930H to LZ's west of Vung Ro Bay, secures north end of tunnel and high ground west of Highway 1, leaving stay behind ambushes enroute. D-day, Co A and Co C conduct airmobile assault to Vung Ro Bay. A Co secures high ground east of Highway 1, Co C clears tunnel, Highway 1 in AO, and secures bridges between CQ 263228 and CQ 256248. From D-2 0700H RECONDO Platoon is lead element of Battalion Ready Reaction Force and will be located at 117th Aviation Battalion CP on 20 minute stand-by to support Co B. Co A is second element of Battalion Ready Reaction Force and will be prepared to move on 1 hour notice. Co C is third element of Battalion Ready Reaction Force and will be prepared to move on 1 hour stand-by. For details see paragraph 3 and operations overlay of 2/502d OPORD 52-66.

b. Phase II: 2/502d exploits B-52 raids on 020630H with 3 rifle companies conducting airmobile assaults on multiple LZ's and sweeping target zones utilizing RECONDO CHECKERBOARD operations. A 1/327 under OPCON CO 2/502 acts as Battalion reserve. RECONDO Platoon, Mortar Platoon and Tac CP conduct heliborne assault to LZ Joan BQ 974880. Naval gunship preparation of LZ's conducted 020650H - 020750H August and assault gunship preparation of LZ's immediately prior to assault. One demolition team, each attached to A, B, and C Co's, and 3rd Platoon (-), A/326th Engineers attached to Tac CP effective 020500H August 1966. For details see paragraph 3 and operational overlay of 2/502d Infantry OPORD 54-66.

c. Phase III: A 2/502d to conduct heliborne assault vicinity BQ 787802 on 8 August to secure area for A 2/320th Artillery. When relieved of artillery security mission, A 2/502d comes under OPCON of 1/327. 2/502d Infantry (-) on 30 minute alert for commitment. Should 2/502d Infantry (-) be committed, A 2/502d reverts to 2/502d (-) control. For details see paragraph 3 and operations overlay of 2/502d Infantry OPORD 56-66.

d. Phase IV: 2/502d (-) departs Ky Lo Valley AO commencing 15 August via airmobile extraction. RECONDO Platoon remain in AO as "Stay Behind" force vicinity BQ 7072. A Co provides security for A 2/320th Artillery vicinity BQ 786803 until relieved. 17 August, Co B moves by truck to vicinity CQ 220329 and CQ 246353 and effect relief of 1st Battalion, 2 KMB. 18 August Co A moves by truck to vicinity CQ 197431, and effects relief of KMB (-) of TUY HOA South Airfield. 17 August, TF BRAVO will move by truck and helicopter to Vung Ro Bay AO and will effect relief of 2/327th Infantry. For details see paragraph 3 and operational overlay of 2/502d Infantry OPORD 57-66.

e. Phase V: B Company relieve A Company of perimeter security effective 021200H September 1966 and secure bridges vicinity coordinates CQ 182399, CQ 184393 and CQ 225368. A Company conducts heliborne assault 301330H August 66 at BQ 923503 and conducts RECONDO CHECKERBOARD in sector. Tac CP helilifted to BQ 947421 301430 August 1966. Co C conducts heliborne assault 310740H August 1966 at CQ 886495 and conducts RECONDO CHECKERBOARD in sector. RECONDO Platoon is helilifted to BQ 947421 at 310840H August 1966 and assumes Battalion IRF. Co B continues to secure TUY HOA South Airfield and Bde (-) perimeter.

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## 7. Execution:

Operation JOHN PAUL JONES, 19 July 1966 through 5 September 1966 was conducted in Phu Yen Province in five separate phases: Phase I in the Vung Ro Bay area south of TUY HOA, Phase II North of TUY AN, Phase III in the Ky Lo Valley, Phase IV in vicinity of TUY HOA South Airfield and Vung Ro Bay, and Phase V in the Phong Hau (1) area and north of the Ba Valley.

On 21 July 1966 2/502d Infantry initiated operation JOHN PAUL JONES with B Company moving by heliborne assault to two LZ's west of Vung Ro Bay. The Battalion (-) remained at TUY HOA as a ready relief force while Company B searched and cleared from the west to the east of Highway 1. Co B made no contact, and secured the highground west of Highway 1, and LZ sites at CQ 268225 and CQ 290234 by the evening of 23 July 1966.

At 240715H July 1966 2/502d (-) moved by heliborne assault to LZ's secured by Co P. All elements seized and secured objectives and LTC Emerson declared Vung Ro Bay secured for 39th Engineer Battalion to begin its construction mission. The first IST landed at 250645H July 1966.

Companies A and C continued to secure their objectives, with elements conducting RECONDO CHECKERBOARD operations in the AO. No contact was made. The RECONDO Platoon conducted a search operation along the railroad from the tunnel at CQ 265235, south to CQ 222180 on 26 July. The 3rd Platoon, Co A 326th Engineers cleared the minefield at CQ 268231.

On 280930H July 1966, Co C returned to TUY HOA South Airfield via heliborne movement. On 29 July 1966 the RECONDO Platoon and Mortar Platoon returned to TUY HOA. On 30 July the 2/502d (-) returned to TUY HOA South Airfield having been relieved in Vung Ro Bay AO by 2/327th Infantry and bringing Phase I of Operation JOHN PAUL JONES to a close.

On 31 July 1966 and 1 August 1966 the 2/502d Infantry prepared for Phase II of operation JOHN PAUL JONES. On the evening of 1 August 1966 the 2/502d Infantry was given the mission of exploiting two B-52 raids 020600H August 1966. The heliborne assault was made without incident and the bomb target zones were searched with no significant contacts or enemy sightings made. A Company reported 1 VC KIA (BC) and B Co 1 VC KIA (BC). Small amounts of documents and equipment were found. All these were evacuated to Brigade. On 030825H August 66 the 2/502d Infantry began extraction to TUY HOA South Airfield, closing at 031515H August 66, and ending Phase II of Operation JOHN PAUL JONES. At this time the 2/502d Infantry began preparation for commitment as IFFV Reserve.

From 4 August 1966 through 9 August 1966 the 2/502d Infantry trained and prepared for commitment as IFFV Reserve. On 071940H August, Company B was committed to secure an artillery position at CQ 134524.

On 091030H August 1966 the 2/502d Infantry was alerted for commitment and Company B was relieved at its artillery security mission at 1145 hours. At 1220 hours Company C began heliborne assault to BQ 716673, followed by Co B at 1445 hours to BQ 596712 and Co A at 1700 hours to BQ 602660.

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Co A killed 1 VC (BC) on 9 August, but no other significant contact was made that day.

During the period 10 August 1966 through 15 August 1966, the 2/502d Infantry conducted CHECKERBOARD operations in the vicinity of the Ky Lo Valley with several small contacts resulting in 18 VC KBGF (BC), 2 VCC, 5 US WIA, 4 US KIA, and 15 weapons captured. On 150730Z August 1966, 2/502d Infantry (-) began extraction to TUY HOA South Airfield, closing at 2130 hours. The RECONDO Platoon remained vicinity BQ 7072 under the OPCON of Brigade. This extraction brought Phase III of Operation JOHN PAUL JONES to a close.

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After returning to TUY HOA South Airfield on 15 August, 2/502d Infantry (-) prepared to assume security mission from 2nd KMB on 171200H August 1966.

On 170800H August 1966 the command of the 2/502d Infantry was relinquished by LTC Henry E. Emerson and assumed by LTC Frank L. Dietrich. At 0930 hours 2/502d (-) began relief of 2nd KMB in security of TUY HOA South Airfield. Co C came under OPCON of Brigade as TF BRAVO securing Highway 1 and Vung Ro Bay. Relief of 2nd KMB was completed 181145H August 1966.

During the period 17 August through 30 August 1966 the 2/502d Infantry executed an intensive small unit weapons training and tactics program concurrent with security missions.

The RECONDO Platoon continued its "Stay Behind" mission in Ky Lo Valley under the OPCON of Brigade until 24 August when it returned to TUY HOA South and 2/502d control. While under the Brigade OPCON the RECONDO Platoon sighted numerous groups of mixed NVA and VC personnel and killed 4 NVA (BC) troops.

On 29 August 1966 TASK FORCE MC FADDEN (comprised of 2 platoons of A Co, a platoon of B Co, the RECONDO Platoon, and 2 PF Platoons) swept a suspected VC agricultural area vicinity CQ 1636.

On 30 August 66, 2/502d (-) was lifted into Phong Hau-1 AO to provide a blocking force for elements of the 18B Regiment escaping to the south. A Co conducted RECONDO CHECKERBOARD Operations northeast to Xuan Son (1) with negative contact; B Co continues to secure Ede (-) perimeter; C Co moved southwest to search high ground north of Ngan Dien (CQ 897471) with negative contact; Recondo Platoon conducted a heliborne assault from vicinity Phong Hau-1 to Cam Thac (2) (CQ 999396) and swept north to CQ 005447 with negative contact.

On 1 September 66, A Co discovered 15 huts and several groups of fortifications in the vicinity of Xuan Son (1), however the unit had negative contact; C Co began to sweep back to the northeast and had negative contact; Recondo Platoon continues to sweep north but had negative contact.

On 3 September A Co was helilifted to 10,000 meters to the east to search the high ground vicinity BQ 9849. Both A and C Co's had negative enemy contact. Recondo Platoon returned southeast to Tac CP and encountered a booby trap vicinity BQ 955433 resulting in 4 US WIA.

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CONFIDENTIAL

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On 4 September, A Co made contact with an unknown size force vicinity BQ 999517 resulting in 5 NVA KIA and 2 RPD machine guns, 3 AK-47 submachine guns and numerous rounds of ammunition captured. One platoon of B Co was inserted as a follow-up force into the area occupied by 2nd Squadron, 8th Cavalry. This platoon had contact with one VC resulting in one VC KIA and one US carbine captured. C Co conducted a heliborne assault on multiple LZ's located vicinity CQ 020495 and CQ 026847 with negative contact.

On 5 September A Co had contact with unknown size enemy force at BQ 999517 resulting in 1 NVAC and 1 NVA KIA and 1 AK-47 captured. Another contact with 7 enemy later that day produced negative results. At 051830H September 1966, B Co was relieved of security for Bde (-) perimeter by 1st Bn, 22nd Infantry and conducted a heliborne assault at BQ 980598 with negative contact. C Co conducted a heliborne assault on multiple LZ's located at CQ 012513 and conducted RECONDO CHECKERBOARD to northeast with negative results.

## 8. Results:

Friendly Losses:

KIA: 6

WIA: 13

Enemy Losses:

VC KBGF (BC): 33

VC KIA (EST): 0

VCC: 6

Wpns/Equip: 22 indiv wpns, 6 crew served wpns, 9 75mm rnds, 3,000 rnds small arms ammo, 25 packs, 1 mortar sight, 2 71B radios, 1 commercial radio, 7 pack horses, several meteorological instruments, gunners quadrant.

## 9. Administrative Matters:

Supply: During Phase I, in the mountains vicinity Vung Ro Bay, a great deal of difficulty was encountered in the re-supply of water since the HUL-D helicopters could not hover to lower water containers (metal and plastic 5 gallon cans) which would burst if simply dropped.

## 10. Special Equipment and Techniques:

One opportunity arose during Phase III to use CS gas dispersed by Army Aviation. The reaction time was one hour and forty minutes, and when the requested equipment arrived the opportunity for its use had been lost.

## 11. Commanders Analysis:

a. Reaction time for employment of riot control agents with airborne disperser is too long for effective employment. During a contact in the Ky Lo Valley area with a reinforced NVA squad equipped with automatic weapons, our Recondo Platoon came upon an excellent opportunity to employ riot control agents. The terrain was a deep narrow ravine which was heavily vegetated. A

7

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