

BW After Action Report OP VAN BUREN

2/6-8/66

This special AA report
focuses on the period 6-8 Feb

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Authority NAD 873541

HEL. QUARTERS
2 D BATTALION (AIRBORNE), 502D INFANTRY
FIRST BRIGADE, 101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION
APO US FORCES 96347

AVAD-C

12 February 1966

SUBJECT: After Action Report Operation 060845H Feb 66 to 081445H Feb 66

TO: Commanding General
1st Brigade 101st Airborne Division
ATTN: AVAD-C
APO US Forces 96347

1. General:

- a. Name of Operation: N/A
- b. Dates of Operation: 060815H Feb 66 to 081445H Feb 66
- c. Location: TUY HOA CO 087287
- d. Control Hq: Hq 2/502
- e. Reporting Officer: Henry E. Emerson, Lt. Col Commanding

2. Task Organization: N/A

3. Supporting Forces:

C Btry 320 Arty
4.2" Mort Plt 2/502
48th Avn Co
Tac Air (Unit unk)

a. All supporting forces were timely and very effective. Thirteen (13) sorties of Tac Air support were used to maximum advantage. Tac Air support was spontaneously and immediately called for when units were impeded by automatic weapons fire. Troop lift helicopters sufficient to helilift one (1) platoon of B 2/502 and subsequently two (2) additional platoons from C 2/502 were expeditiously dispatched and, though LZ's were changed enroute, effected smooth and efficient pick up and delivery of troops to designated LZ's.

4. Intelligence: Unconfirmed reports indicated that a PAVN Bn was located vic CO 1026 with the mission of securing rice during the period of the rice harvest. Elements of the 5th Bn 95th PAVN Regt were in prepared positions vic HAMLET MY LAM CO 094280. This terrain around the HAMLET was open rice paddies with intermittent drainage canals and ditches. The HAMLET was heavily vegetated with hanging groves and tall trees. The weather was generally clear during the day with a full moon at night.

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5. Mission: Continue surveillance over routes of egress and avenues of approach into TAOR GOLD to protect rice harvesters and deny VC access to rice harvest areas; continue aggressive RECONDO Patrolling to detect and fix VC Forces and/or facilities for exploitation using CHECKERBOARD concept of operation.

6. Concept of Operation: Each company conducted vigorous RECONDO Patrolling in accordance with Bn Patrol Plan (INCLOSURE I RECONDO Patrol Plan). Platoon (-) CHECKERBOARD behind selected RECONDO Patrols to exploit enemy targets within their capabilities and/or fix larger VC Units until CHECKERBOARD Units could reinforce or a reinforcing helicopter assault could be conducted. CHECKERBOARD Operations took place on successive nights with the Platoons (-) moving to areas previously occupied by RECONDO Patrols and the RECONDO Patrols moving on to other designated locations. This process normally continues over a three (3) to five (5) day period.

7. Execution: 2/502 (-) conducted CHECKERBOARD Operations in TAOR GOLD with B 2/502 operating in the South Eastern Sector. After suffering 2 WIA casualties from AF mines, B Company's RECONDO Platoon (-) was instructed to wait for daylight, and then to move to its subsequent location. While conducting this daylight move, RECONDO Platoon (-) became engaged via coord CQ 087287 with a VC Force estimated initially to be one (1) VC Platoon, and subsequently estimated to be a VC Company. This engagement developed into a major operation when a second platoon from B 2/502 moved overland to reinforce the RECONDO element in contact and exploit by hitting the VC Force on its Northern flank. The third rifle platoon of B 2/502 then conducted a helicopter assault via coord CQ 087287 to block the Southern and Western flank of the VC Force. Each platoon subsequently became engaged developing the outline of the VC position. During this period the first of thirteen (13) sorties of T-28 air strikes hit the target area. Although the VC Force was now contained B 2/502 lacked sufficient combat power to overrun it and C 2/502 (-), consisting of two (2) rifle platoons and Co Hq conducted a helicopter assault to the South, via coord CQ 087287 with the mission of sweeping North and blocking retreat or reinforcement of the trapped VC Force. The VC Force, solidly entrenched with mutually supporting AW positions, fought tenaciously and professionally throughout the ground action and air strikes. The fierce defense, together with the recovery of an apparent PAVN KIA body was an indication that the engaged enemy force was, in fact, the 95th PAVN Unit reportedly in the area. Later intelligence reports confirmed the PAVN identity. Co B 1/327 was alerted for possible employment, prepared for a heliborne assault and passage of OPCON to 2/502. Co B and Co C (-), 2/502 linked at 1850 hours effectively ending further resistance of the trapped PAVN Force. B 1/327 began its helicopter lift, arriving on an LZ secured by B 2/502, at approximately 1845 hours. A Task Force, consisting of B 2/502, C 2/502 (-), and B 1/327, Bn XO commanding, was organized, swept the battlefield and secured a perimeter in the area of engagement at approximately 062000H Feb 66. No further action took place during the night. The results of the engagement were 39 VC KIA (BC), 15 VC KIA (EST), and 15 VC WIA (EST). Various types of equipment and several weapons were taken. Most of the bodies found wore uniforms and black leather belts with stars on the buckles, an

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additional indication that they were FAVN. At 0845 hours, 7 Feb 66 B 2/502 and C 2/502 (-) conducted a sweep to return to Bn Base Area. B 2/502 returned directly West with no encounters on the way and closed in its base area at 071030H Feb 66. C 2/502 (-) swept wide to the South to search an area from which sniper fire was received on 6 Feb 66 and encountered another well entrenched VC Force via coord CQ 090291 estimated initially to be one (1) Platoon. C 2/502 (-) maneuvered aggressively, developed the action, and closed off three (3) sides of the position, each approximately 150 meters long. 1/327 committed Co B and Tiger Force to the flank and rear and Co C 2/502 (-) passed to OFCON 1/327. A vicious action ensued throughout the remainder of the day. The VC Force, by all indications, was probably a Heavy Weapons Company or a reinforced Rifle Company. The results of the day long engagement were 63 VC KIA (BC) and sixty (60) weapons captured. Of this total, C 2/502 (-) accounted for 18 VC KIA (BC) and 20 weapons captured. C 2/502 (-) was released from OFCON 1/327 at 1415 hours and returned to its base area via coord CQ 050309 at 1515 hours. The return of C 2/502 (-) concluded 2/502 Infantry participation in the engagement. The friendly losses in this operation were: 8 KIA, 43 WIA from the 2d Bn (Abn), 502d Infantry. Enemy losses as a result of 2d Bn (Abn), 502d Infantry during this operation were: 1 CIA, 57 KIA (BC), 15 WIA (EST), 15 KIA (EST), 30 weapons captured including AK 47's and light machine gun, FRC/10, switch board, and a large quantity of LBE.

8. Results:

<u>Friendly Losses</u>	<u>Enemy Losses</u>
8 KIA	1 CIA
43 WIA	57 KIA (BC)
	15 WIA (EST)
	15 KIA (EST)
	30 weapons including AK 47's and light machine gun.
	FRC/10
	Switch board
	Large quantity of LBE

9. Administrative Matters:

a. Supply:

(1) Routine resupply was requested twenty four (24) hours in advance and delivery was made on schedule. However in one instance the routine resupply of Class I, II and IV supplies was not delivered as scheduled at 1700 to 1800 hours and no air lift was available until approximately 0900 hours the next day. This delay caused two (2) companies to delay their moves until the resupply could be made available.

(2) During the operational period a total of three (3) emergency Class V missions were required and delivery was prompt.

(3) Through experience of past and recent operations this unit has found that the on individual basic load of 5.56 ammunition should be not less than 400 rounds.

b. Maintenance: Routine daily maintenance was conducted on all equipment. In addition as all vehicles are presently held at TWY HOA South Airfield 100 per cent maintenance stand down is being conducted and all vehicle scheduled maintenance will soon be up to date. Repair parts for the field ranges are extremely short in supply and will become critical within the next 30 to 60 days. In particular, the lack of generators for the field ranges.

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c. Treatment of casualties evacuation and hospitalization: It was learned that hand flares and very pistol flares are excellent signal devices for guiding choppers at night. Recommend that two (2) very pistol flares or hand flares be carried by all squad size elements.

d. Transportation: This unit presently has three (3) M274A1 mules in the field. When the terrain permits these are utilized to the maximum for movement of heavy crew served weapons and ammunition. No maintenance difficulties have been encountered.

e. Communications: The Admin/Log communications were sufficient during the operational period.

f. Special Equipment and Techniques: A very critical phase of any operation involving close Air Support is the differentiation between friendly and enemy positions. Two (2) techniques used for this purpose by this Bn in the above described operation were: (a) The wearing of panels (VS-17) on the backs of personnel of lead elements. (b) Marking forward elements with smoke grenades. These techniques proved extremely effective and enabled the Air Strikes to be called in very close to friendly troops putting maximum combat power on the enemy. The first technique is now being adopted throughout the Brigade.

11. Commander Analysis: The use of (a) CS grenades or air delivered CS to exploit and (b) Flame throwers for attacking the fortified positions and bunkers would have facilitated the success of the operation. Also a thinner mixture of napalm in the air force bombs would have been more effective against the bunkers and trenches. The thinner solution would have seeped into the positions quicker and more thoroughly than the mixture used.

12. Recommendations:

a. RCA be used more extensively in conjunction with small unit operations.

b. SOP be established throughout the Brigade for marking air strike targets to insure maximum efficiency between air and ground operations.

(1) Suggested modes of implementation:

(a) Attach VS-17 panels to backs of personnel in lead elements.

(b) Use colored smoke to mark lead elements.

c. Use of thinner napalm for maximum penetration of entrenchments.

d. More extensive use of RECONDO Patrols throughout the Brigade to find and fix the enemy (a RECONDO Patrol is a combination of a RECONNAISSANCE and COMBAT Patrol). They have the dual mission of extensive reconnoitering of the enemy's activities and location and engaging enemy personnel within the capability of the patrol to destroy or fix until reinforcing units arrive.

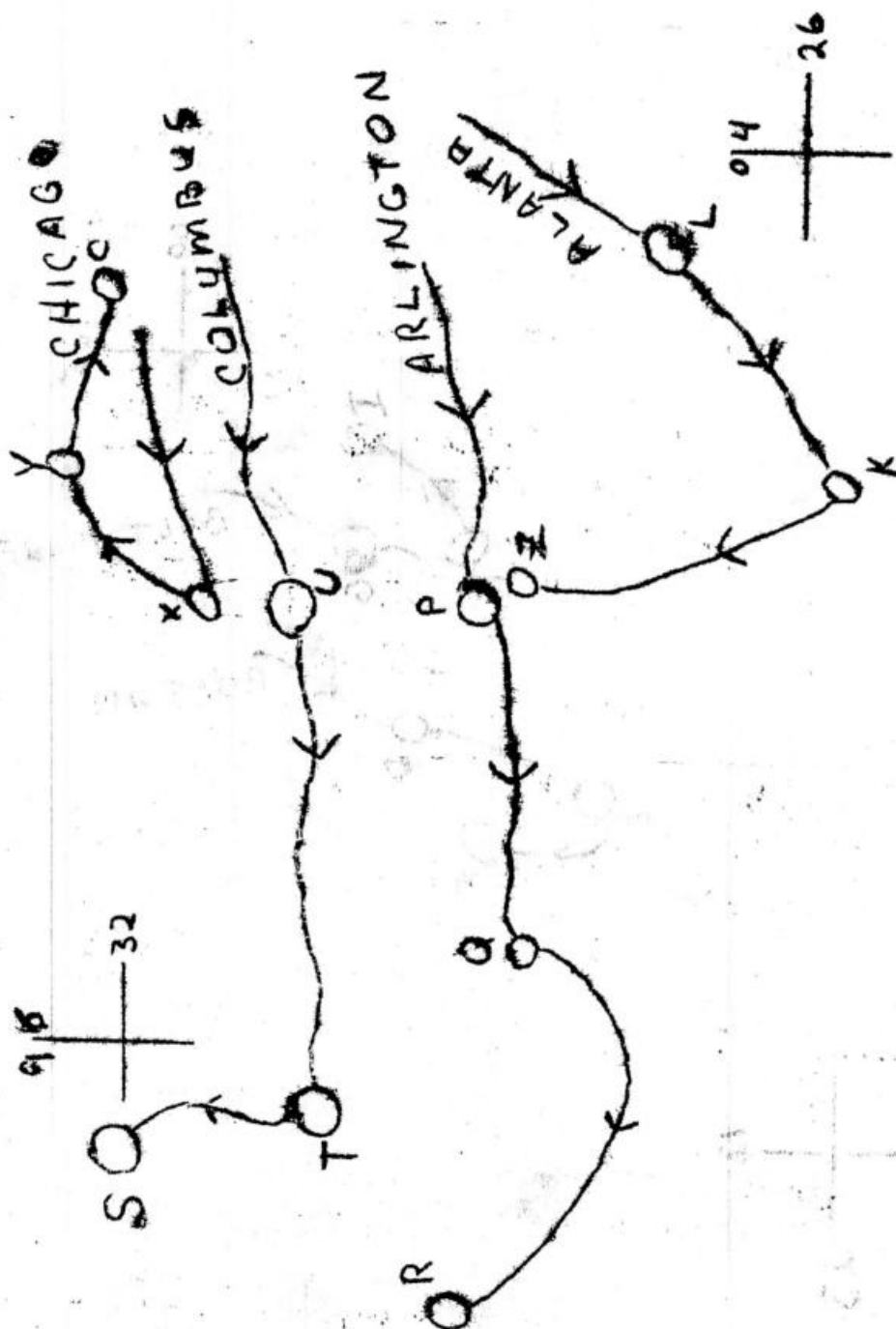
2 Incl

Donald R. Emerson
For HENRY E. EMERSON
Lt Col, Infantry
Commanding

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inclosure 1 (RECONNO Patrol Plan) to after Action Report Operation
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Inlosure II (RECONDO Patrol Plan) to After Action Report 060845H Feb 66
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