

BN After Action Report
OP VAN BUREN

1/15 - 2/20/66

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Authority

ND873541

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
 ADQUARTERS, 2D BATTALION (AIRBORNE), 502D INFANTRY
 APO SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 96347

AVADC

25 February 1966

SUBJECT: After Action Report (150600H January 1966 - 201200 February 1966)

Van Buren

TO: Commanding General
 1st Dde, 101st Abn Div
 APO San Francisco, California 96347

1. General:

- a. Name of Operation: NA.
- b. Dates of Operation: 150600H January 1966 - 201200H February 1966.
- c. Location: TRUNG PHAN PROVINCE, RVN.
- d. Control headquarters: Headquarters, 2d Bn (Abn), 502d Inf.
- e. Reporting Officer: Henry E Emerson, Lt Colonel, Commanding

2. Task Organization:

A 2/502	Bn Control:
B 2/502	4.2" Mortar Platoon
C 2/502	3rd Plt (-), A Co, 326 Engr
	Tm, 3rd RRU
	AT Plt
	RECONDO Plt

3. Supporting Forces:

C Btry 320 Arty
 48th Avn Co
 Tac Air (Unit Unk)
 Medical Evac (DUSTOFF)

Majority of supporting forces were timely and very effective. However, occasionally the time needed to adjust Artillery fire gave enemy time to move out of the area and minimized its effect. Numerous sorties of Tac air support were used to maximum advantage. Tac air support was both immediate and preplanned. Troop lift helicopters were utilized many times throughout the operation to lift personnel and equipment into locations inaccessible by vehicle expeditiously, and with personnel fresh for combat. Although the LZ's were sometimes obscure and even changed enroute, the operations generally were conducted efficiently. A certain amount of confusion resulted however when multiple pick-up and delivery LZ's were used. In order for multiple LZ operations to be conducted with a minimum of problems the pilots must be thoroughly briefed.

4. Intelligence:

From 15 January 1966 to 18 January 1966, elements of the 95th NVA Regt were located in the mountain area South of TUY HOA. We anticipated that these elements would attempt to gain control of the rice harvest area. Only small security elements were encountered during the operation.

From 18 January 1966 to 1 February 1966, operations in the TUY HOA area indicated that local VC guerrilla elements up to platoon size, were occupying the hamlets north of the east-west 55 grid line on either side of Highway 1. West of TUY HOA in the vicinity of hamlet XUAN HOA CQ105490 was an estimated VC platoon, identity unknown. During the period of operations, contacts were made with elements as indicated on overlay.

From 2 February 1966 to 10 February 1966, elements of the 95th NVA Regt were believed to be located in the areas southwest of TUY HOA vicinity NHI DA

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1 HON CHAO mountain, attempting to secure rice from the local area during the rice harvest. Elements of the 5th Bn, 95th NVA Regt were contacted in a major engagement vicinity CQ095285 on 7 February 1966.

From 11 February 1966 to 19 February 1966 elements of the 95th NVA Regt and possibly the 30th Bn, 3rd Hard Core Regt were located in the valley and mountain area along the SONG BANH LAI River. The area had many base areas and a large number of cache sites with well entrenched outposts.

The terrain in the TUY HOA area is open rice paddies crisscrossed with numerous canals and intermittent streams. The mountains to the southwest and north have steep rocky slopes covered with a heavy undergrowth under a canopy of high trees. The weather during the operations was generally clear with intermittent showers.

Indications from the civilian population are that they would rather be under the government control but the VC continue to dominate their hamlets. If they leave, they will lose everything so they stay where their homes are.

5. Mission: Task Force 2/502 move from PHAN RANG to TUY HOA by C-130 aircraft and IST, conduct combat operations as directed in assigned sectors: and protect rice harvest in TUY HOA area.

6. Concept of Operation:

Phase I (150600H - 171100 H January 1966)

Task Force 2/502 moved from PHAN RANG to TUY HOA NORTH Airfield, relieved ARVN Abn Bde (-) vicinity PHU KHE (2)(BQ221317) and assumed blocking positions.

Phase II (171100H - 020900H February 1966)

Task Force moved to vicinity TRAM MINH CHINH (BQ143513) and established a Bn Base Camp; secured assigned portion of TUY HOA NORTH Airfield with one company; conducted RECONDO CHECKERBOARD Operations from Base Camp to the North and Northwest of TUY HOA; conducted evacuation of an orphanage at HOI TIN, 22 February 1966.

Phase III (020900H - 201200H February 1966)

Task Force 2/502 participated in OPERATION VAN BUREN to the Southwest of TUY HOA: initially relieved the ROK Marine Bde in sector; conducted extensive RECONDO CHECKERBOARD Operations in Area GOLD for a sustained period of 18 days.

7. Execution: 2/502 moved from PHAN RANG beginning 150730H January 1966 to the TUY HOA area. Movement was conducted both by Air and IST and was completed 171100H January 1966. 2/502 (-) relieved ARVN Abn Bde (-) vicinity coordinates CQ2230, established blocking positions and initiated vigorous RECONDO patrolling, denying the enemy routes of advance and protecting the flank of the ROK Marines. The results of this action were 5 VC KIA (EST) and small amounts of equipment captured. 2/502 then moved from position vicinity PHU KHE to establish a base vicinity TRAM MINH CHINH north of TUY HOA vicinity coordinates BQ143513. The Battalion closed into this base effective 171645H January 1966. On 18 January 1966 one company occupied a designated portion of defensive position of TUY HOA NORTH Airfield and the Battalion (-) conducted RECONDO Patrols. The RECONDO Platoon conducted a joint ARVN/RECONDO patrol vicinity coordinates BQ129539. 2/502 conducted a Search and Destroy Operation using infiltrated RECONDO patrols as guides and blocking positions 182030H January 1966 vicinity coordinates BQ1158. This operation was terminated 201745H January 1966. Also during this period the RECONDO Platoon conducted joint operations with RF/PF forces in a sweep of a village vicinity coordinates BQ150558. The results of the Battalion's operations for this period were no friendly losses, 6 VC KIA (BC), 2 VC KIA (EST), 1 WIA (BC), 3 WIA (EST), and 8 VCS. On 21 January 1966 the 2/502 conducted a combined helicopter assault and extraction. B 2/502 secured an LZ vicinity coordinates CQ082743 and evacuated Vietnamese children, nuns, and priests from a nearby orphanage. The operation was completely successful; no enemy contact was made although numerous VC were observed throughout the entire area. Five days prior to the extraction of the orphans the RECONDO platoon, reinforced, moved to TUY HOA vic coord CQ 110680 to gain EPI for the operation. The 2/502 conducted RECONDO patrols

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On 24 January 1966, a patrol from B 2/502 engaged an estimated VC platoon vicinity coordinates BQ105495. The patrol in contact was reinforced with 2 platoons from B 2/502. The Company (-) then swept through the area and conducted subsequent Search and Clear operations. The operation terminated 251530H January 1966 with the following results: 1 VC KIA (BC) and 15 VC KBA (Prob). C 2/502 conducted a RECONDO patrol and the initial phases of CHECKERBOARD operations on 26 and 27 January 1966 vicinity coordinates CQ061542. Concurrently, the Bn prepared for a Search and Destroy operation to the North. B 2/502 (-), A 2/502 (-), 17th Cavalry OPCON 2/502, AT Platoon 2/502, and 3A/326 Enar conducted a Search and Destroy operation vicinity coordinates BQ154584 initiated 280600 January 1966. The 17th Cavalry (-) and B 2/502 infiltrated into the operation area under the cover of darkness. A 2/502 and AT Platoon conducted a heliborne assault to establish blocking positions to the East and North respectively. A 2/502 then joined B 2/502 and the combined force conducted Search and Destroy operations to the North. This operation terminated 311515H January 1966. These two operations accounted for 8 VC KIA (BC), 5 VC KIA (EST), 63 VCS and numerous types of small arms ammunition captured. Friendly losses were 2 WIA. On 1 February 1966 the 2/502 conducted RECONDO patrols and prepared for operations to the South to protect the rice harvest in the SONG DA RANG River Valley. The 2/502 RECONDO Platoon returned from TUY AN to the Bn base. 2/502 conducted a heliborne assault on LZ RED CQ075535 and LZ BLUE CQ055332 on 021055H February 1966. Later in the day a Wire Laying Party, secured by the RECONDO Platoon was ambushed by an estimated VC platoon vicinity coordinates CQ085355 at 021330H February 1966. B 2/502 (-) flanked the VC force from the East and a vicious fire fight ensued. Three (3) air strikes, artillery fire, and 4.2" mortar fire supported the operation. The operation terminated 021900H with friendly losses of 1 KIA and 19 WIA. Enemy losses were 16 VC KIA (BC), 17 VC KIA (EST), 1 VCS, and 2 weapons captured. At 021900H February 1966 the 2/502 conducted RECONDO patrol in vicinity coordinates CQ059303, accounting for 2 VC KIA (BC), 9 VC KIA (EST), 1 VCS, and 2 weapons captured. Friendly losses were 1 KIA and 3 WIA. The next day, 3 February 1966, the Bn (-) attacked along two axes to secure objectives (hills) 105 and 51. A 2/502 and C 2/502 secured their objectives with negative contact. B 2/502 conducted a Search and Destroy operation to the East and South while moving to secure the Eastern portion of Hill 51. B Co had negative contact enroute to his objective, however, it discovered 6 VC KIA on the hill, believed to be the results of Artillery fire during a previous engagement. Headquarters 2/502 was helilifted to Hill 51 041200H February 1966 and the Bn prepared for operations in TAOR GOLD. A 2/502 RECONDO patrol engaged a small VC force on the afternoon of 4 February 1966. This engagement developed into a Bn (-) operation when additional VC forces were sighted in the area. A Co attacked and pursued while C Co (-) assisted and joined the pursuit. B 2/502 was helilifted 041645H February 1966 to a blocking position vicinity coordinates CQ012300 to block the VC force. Results of the Battalion's operations were 30 VC KIA (BC), 1 VCS, 15 KIA (EST), 15 WIA (EST), 2 Rocket Launchers, and 44 weapons captured. On 5 February 1966 the 2/502 conducted light RECONDO patrolling activities. During the period 6 through 8 February 1966 the 2/502 engaged a NVA force of estimated reinforced company size. The results of this operation were 57 VC KIA (BC), 15 WIA (EST), 15 KIA (EST), 30 weapons captured, and large quantities of LBE. Friendly losses were 8 KIA and 43 WIA. (For details see Inclosure 3, After Action Report period 060845H February 1966 to 081445H February 1966.) During the latter phases of this operation a RECONDO patrol from A 2/502 became engaged with an estimated VC platoon vicinity BQ988281. After a vicious fire fight, to include close combat in VC trenches, contact was broken. The results were 4 VC KIA (BC), 2 VC KIA (EST), and one (1) SMG captured. On 9 February 1966 2/502 conducted Search and Destroy mission "STRIKE" in the Western Sector of TAOR GOLD. The 2/502's Operation "STRIKE" terminated 101815H February 1966 with the following results: 13 VC KIA (BC), 1 VCC and 10 weapons captured. Friendly casualties were 5 KIA and 10 WIA. On 11, 12, and 13 February 1966 the 2/502 conducted nine (9) squad sized RECONDO patrols BQ995285 at 141545H February 1966. A 2/502 infiltrated into the area vicinity coordinates BQ950278 the day before and CHECKERBOARD. C 2/502 discovered a cache of medical supplies, ammunition and explosives vicinity coordinates BQ995285 operations. Results for the period 101815H February 1966 to 141800H February 1966 were the following: 2 VC KIA (BC), 2 VC WIA (EST), 1 weapon, 40,000 rounds small arms ammunition, 7 Bangalore torpedoes, 12 grenades, and 50 pounds TNT. 2/502 continued aggressive RECONDO patrolling in the Western Sector of TAOR GOLD during the period 15 - 17 February 1966, discovering many caches with large amounts of equipment and many weapons. The following enemy equipment and weapons were captured: 43 weapons, eight 60mm mortar rounds, 30 uniforms, and 60,000 rounds of various types of small arms ammuni-

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results were 3 VC KIA (BC) and 18 VCS. B 2/502 moved overland to secure artillery position vicinity coordinates CQ 091358 at 171400H February 1966. No contact was made enroute. The 2/502 (-) in Southern sector of TAOR GOLD continued aggressive RECONDO patrolling during the period 17, 18, and 19 February 1966. Results of actions for this period were: 1 VC KBA, 3 VCS, 1 KIA (BC) and 1 AA gun mount captured. 2/502 closed TUY HOA SOUTH Airfield 200835H February 1966 terminating OPERATION VAN BUREN.

8. Results:

Friendly Losses:

21 KIA
96 WIA
0 MIA
0 Wpns

Enemy Losses:

156 VC KIA (BC) 109 VC KIA (EST)
0 VC WIA (BC) 31 VC WIA (EST)
5 VC KBA (PROB)
11 VC CIA

Equipment:

- a. US wpns captured: 22
- b. Foreign wpns: 87
- c. 100,000 rounds of assorted small arms ammunition, 200 hand grenades, 125 pounds demolitions, numerous documents, IBE, uniforms, and medical supplies captured.
- d. All air strike targets were investigated by ground troops.

9. Administrative Matters:

a. Supply:

(1) Routine resupply missions were conducted throughout the operation in an exemplary manner. Pilots from various helicopter companies commented on the battalions orderly operating procedures as missions were consolidated to provide maximum utilization of the available aircraft.

(2) The ASR for smoke grenades is not sufficient to adequately support an infantry battalion dependent upon aircraft support for resupply and medical evacuation. To supplement the smoke the battalion utilized VS-17 panels for identification of helicopter resupply pads.

(3) Four (4) emergency resupply missions were requested during OPERATION VAN BUREN and all missions were completed within the desired time frame.

b. Maintenance: Daily maintenance was performed on all equipment. Additionally organization maintenance mechanics were deployed to the field to perform necessary maintenance on the M274 Mule. No major maintenance problems were encountered on this problem.

c. Transportation: The M274A1 (Mule) was used for short haul requirements such as heavy mortars, communication and supplies. The M274A1 is easily transported by HULD aircraft.

d. Communications: The Battalion Admin/Log relay station provided by the Brigade Commo Officer provided continuous service during the period 10 February to 20 February 1966 and proved to be a most valuable aid.

10. Special Equipment and Techniques:

a. Use of RCA against entrenched personnel and bunkers can reduce friendly casualties if gas is employed properly. If the gas is air dropped at high altitudes (500 feet and above) the gas disperses and the results are negligible.

b. VS-17 panels were effectively used to mark lead elements for air strikes by attaching panels to backs of personnel. This enabled the airborne FAC to see exactly where the friendly troops were located so that maximum utilization

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INCIDENTS: 161201H Jan 66 to 292030 Jan 66

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1. 101201H Jan 66, 5 VC KIA (BC) CQ198322.
2. 161135H Jan 66, VC squad blocked Highway 1, CQ195367 to CQ192375.
3. 161140H Jan 66, 1 VC KIA, 1 VC WIA CQ195245.
4. 161710H Jan 66, 1 VC KIA, 2 VC WIS CQ200245.
5. 191120H Jan 66, 1 VC body CQ125569.
6. 201045H Jan 66, 1 VC KIA, 3 VC WIA CQ113545.
7. 221200H Jan 66, 1 VC KIA (BC), 1 VC captured CQ100555.
8. 221815HJ Jan 66, 1 VC KIA (BC), and 2 hand grenades captured CQ110492. 230945H VC threw grenade at patrol, 1 VC KIA (BC) and 1 captured. 241310H 1 VC KIA (BC) and 1 VC WIA. 241415H, 1 VC KIA (BC) and 2 VCS.
9. 241747H Jan 66, 1 VC KIA (BC), CQ095556.
10. 251700H Jan 66, Found 1 VC with weapon CQ113528.
11. 261315H Jan 66, 1 VC KIA with weapon CQ110522.
12. 271110H Jan 66, 1 VC KIA CQ087650. 281810H 4 VC captured.
13. 281555H Jan 66, C 2/502 captured 1 M-2 carbine, 3 grenades, 2 1/2 tons of rice, and 4 bikes, CQ065535. 281530H A 2/502 reported a fire fight with 3 VC, 1 VC KIA, 1 VC WIA, 1 weapon and 3 grenades found.
14. 281520H Jan 66, 1 VC KIA with horse shoe roll and black clothing, CQ146663.
15. 281505H Jan 66, 2 VC killed in water at CQ134660.
16. 281330H Jan 66, B 2/502 captured 2 VC with weapons CQ162574.
17. 281204H Jan 66, A 2/502 killed 1 VC with weapon at CQ139610.
18. 292030H Jan 66, A 2/502 killed 1 VC at CQ135608.

~~Appendix
Overlay~~

Inclosure #1

VB-2

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43. 101500H Feb 66, 1 VC soldier in uniform with model 98 Mauser carrying conduct pass surrendered to C Co BQ944309.
44. 101517H Feb 66, A Co killed 1 VC (BC) w/weapon BQ936282 with CHICOM semi-automatic weapon.
45. 101929H Feb 66, C Co found 3 VC bodies BQ958278 no weapons, 110905H gray uniforms and documents found, documents appear to be VC S4's, designation of VC Co as C-22.
46. 111415H Feb 66, A Co patrol at BQ936334 sighted undetermined number of VC, 1 VC KIA (BC) 1 grease gun captured, KIA had bush hat 50 rounds 45 cal ammo and 2 stick grenades.
47. 120916H Feb 66, C Co patrol found training site, platoon size, dummy grenades and documents BQ932308.
48. 130930H Feb 66, Training room found at BQ935305, 1 carbine clip, 1 canteen, several papers and books and training grenades.
49. 130930H Feb 66, found 2 anti-personnel mines BQ922293.
50. 141640H Feb 66, A Co found in cave vicinity BQ945271, 19 rounds 45 cal, 520 rounds 7.92, clothing, 50 lbs TNT, manuals and medicine, 141830H 1 VC KIA (BC), 1 VC WIA escaped. 1 Cal 45 IMG.
51. 141431H Feb 66, A Co found cache, 20 black uniforms, caves destroyed, 2 VC KIA (BC) 962273.
52. 141435H Feb 66, 34,000 rounds 7.92, 160 lbs nitro starch, 7 Bangalore torpedoes 995284, Mauser.
53. 151230H Feb 66, 1 VCS captured at BQ994290 with small bag of rice.
54. C Co patrol found 1 VC KIA (BC) approximately 1 week old at BQ995284. 161525 H found ammo cache, BQ997270, containing 2 M-1 rifles, 1 BAR, 4 BRENT IMG, 5 M-3 grease guns, 27 Mausers, 1 MAS 36, 1 M-79, 1 NG 34 AA with 3 tripods, 8000 rounds 7.92 ammo, 1000 rounds 7.92 ammo on belt, 71 hand grenades, 37 various magazines, 2 40mm rockets, 1 AA sight, 20 booby trap blasting caps, and approximately 200 lbs of various types of uniforms.
55. 161320H Feb 66, C Co 1 VC KIA vicinity 997266, carrying chow, no weapon or equipment.
56. 171119H Feb 66, 1 VC escaped, left behind 2 stick grenades, 982264.
57. 171230H Feb 66, Found cache with 2 1/2 lbs of nitro starch, approximately 30 uniforms, 200 rounds of small arms ammo and documents 999279.
58. 171300H Feb 66, IPW reported 1000 VC in vicinity CQ015275.

CUMULATIVE:

ENEMY LOSSES as of 1300H 17 Feb 1966-

KIA (BC): 155
 KIA (EST): 109
 WIA (EST): 31
 VCC: 11

WEAPONS: Thompson 45 Cal SMG 1, Carbine M-1 2, Carbine M-2A1 1, BAR M-1918 3, M-3 cal 45 12, AK-47 SMG 27, MAS 1936 bolt action rifle 2, Springfield 1903 bolt action 2, MG 34 3, CHICOM 40mm RL 3, M1s M-29 IMG 1, CHICOM AA HMG 1, M-1 7, Mauser 98 30, PPSH 41 3, PPSH 43 1, CHICOM Carbine 7.92 2, Japanese SMG 1, CHICOM AR 1, BREN IMG 4, M-79 (US) 1, approximately 100,000 assorted SA ammo, approximately 200 assorted hand grenades, demmo approximately 125 lbs, 1 AA sight for MG-34, 3 AA tripods for MG-34, 5 40mm rockets, approximately 1 ton of assorted clothing and equipment, 1 PRC-10 and assorted radio equipment, 8 60mm mortar rounds, 7 Bangalore torpedoes, large numbers of documents, approximately 40 lbs of medical supplies, blasting caps 20, 3 pack horses.

FRIENDLY LOSSES as of 1300H 17 Feb 66-

KIA: 21
 WIA: 91
 1 PRC-25 Radio

~~1~~ Appendix
 Overlay