

## Chapter 6. Cordon Operations; March-June 1968

In early June 1968, knowing that I would turn over command of the brigade later that month, I asked Major James J. Waldeck, who had become brigade S-3 in mid-April, to prepare a file for the records of the brigade on the cordon operations that we had conducted, March through June. He did so, and I took home with me a copy of his report of 22 June.

A year and a half after later I used that file and other material to write an article for Army magazine called "How We Did It in Thua Thien."

Published in the May 1970 issue (which appeared as I was back in Vietnam serving as deputy senior advisor to the RVN's Commanding General, IV Corps and Military Region IV, at Can Tho in the Vietnam Delta), that article's introduction read:

"The 2d Brigade of the 101st Airborne Division succeeded in Thua Thien Province in 1968 by applying the three basic principles it had formulated for destroying the enemy: work closely with the Vietnamese, exert constant and unrelenting pressure on the enemy day and night, and at every opportunity quickly encircle him so tightly that he cannot wriggle out of the trap."<sup>1</sup>

The article began...

*"In early March 1968, the 2d Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, moved its command post to Landing Zone Sally, eight miles northwest of Hue, in Thua Thien Province, Republic of Vietnam.*

*"The brigade had been under the operational control of the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) in the fierce fighting following the NVA Tet offensive, beginning in late January. Battalions of the brigade had decisively defeated NVA formations from Quang Tri to the Street Without Joy to Hue. The 2d Brigade now rejoined the 101st Airborne Division.*

*"During the next 100 days, from mid-March to the end of June 1968, the brigade was to forge a remarkable record of achievement.*

---

<sup>1</sup> This combination of principles can justifiably be called an original formulation of the 2d Brigade. Certainly we were motivated and supported by General Barsanti himself in the second of these principles, "exert constant and unrelenting pressure on the enemy day and night." But the whole of the conception and its daily application in practice was in April-June a trademark of the 2d Brigade. The practice continued with success and without interruption upon transfer of brigade command to Colonel John A. Hoefling.

*"The full record of that achievement and of all those magnificent soldiers who took part in it can never be completely portrayed. But this is the basic sweep of that story.*

*"This is how the troopers of the 2d Brigade did it in Thua Thien..."*

The text continued...

"I am told that the countryside of Thua Thien, around the ancient and imperial city of Hue, is quiet and secure now, two years later. Farmers tend their fields, children go to school, and the daily life of the villagers moves in a rather peaceful fashion.

"In March 1968, however, the lowland plains north and west of Hue were infested with North Vietnamese Army formations. These NVA units had infiltrated into South Vietnam from the north. In January they had occupied the villages. In the Tet offensive they had entered the city of Hue. After having been driven out of Hue, they were now moving about the countryside. The roads were insecure, the district towns were beleaguered, and many villages and hamlets were under VC and NVA control.

"Just a little more than three months later, by the end of June 1968, the NVA was gone and the process of digging out the last of the remaining VC units was under way.

"The stage was set for the continuing transformation of this area into the peaceful, secure region that it is today.

"How did this remarkable change take place? What did the 2d Brigade do, and in what ways -- perhaps different -- did it do it, to bring about in 100 days a completely new complexion in the countryside?"

The next six pages copy the remainder of the article.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup>Brigade records shown the correct spelling of the name of the battalion commander of the 1/501 to be Prokup, not Procup as in this article.

**Brig. Gen. Cushman**  
**HOW WE DID IT**  
**IN THUA THIEN**

mation of this area into the peaceful, secure region that it is today.

How did this remarkable change take place? What did the 2d Brigade do, and in what ways—perhaps different—did it do it, to bring about in 100 days a completely new complexion in this countryside?

**T**hree basic rules of operation were applied by the units of the 2d Brigade during this period. The first of these was: *work closely with the Vietnamese.*

These lowland plains were populated by the Vietnamese villagers, and the enemy was among them. Vietnamese could tell friend from foe far better than we could. They were far more familiar with the area than we could be. Vietnamese authorities had access to intelligence through the villages and hamlets where we had little. And the Vietnamese forces—Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN), Regional Forces (RF) and Popular Forces (PF)—had numbers to augment our own.

So we immediately began to work with the district and province officials and with the units of the ARVN 1st Infantry Division. We did this in several ways:

Whenever possible, our battalion command posts were set up alongside the Vietnamese district chief's headquarters. Where we could not co-locate, we set up permanent liaison officers with the district chiefs.

We took it as our task to help the local forces—the Regional and Popular Forces—to train them, to help them occasionally when supplies were short, to encourage them.

Platoons of the brigade would have with them one or two or three Vietnamese from the RF or PF of the district in which they were operating.

We set up joint U.S.-Vietnamese night ambushes. Our battalion reconnaissance platoons teamed up with their Vietnamese district counterparts.

Using our "log-bird" helicopters (normally used in logistical roles for sling-load resupply), we moved the RF squads and platoons around in "mini-assaults" when intelligence told us a likely VC target was in a hamlet.

Our battalion commanders also took it as their task to provide coordination for all actions in the area. Everything from Navy patrol boats to Revolutionary Development teams was tied in to the battalion CP.

---

**BRIG. GEN. JOHN H. CUSHMAN** commanded the 2d Brigade of the 101st Airborne Division from September 1967 through June 1968, after which he became CG of Fort Devens, Mass. He returned to Vietnam in April 1970 for his third tour. He presently is deputy commanding general of the Delta Military Assistance Command.

We worked closely with the province chief in Hue and with his advisors, and we established excellent working relationships with the commander of the ARVN 1st Infantry Division and his staff and advisors in Hue.

The command post of the ARVN 1st Division's 3d Regiment was only half a mile from a brigade CP. The regimental commander, Lt. Col. Phan Ban Hoa, and I attended each other's daily briefings and our staffs coordinated operations.

My battalion commanders and I never let a day go by without checking in with district chiefs in our area of operations (AO).

This cooperation paid off tremendously in intelligence. Our intelligence networks were closely tied together. We began to find that the Vietnamese knew a great deal that we didn't know, and when it was put together with what we knew, we were able to operate far more effectively.

One thing that caused the Vietnamese to share their intelligence with us was that as soon as we got good information about the enemy we immediately did something about it. They learned that to give information to us was to their own advantage.

**T**hat leads to our second principle of operations.

This fundamental principle of the entire 101st Airborne Division, emphasized over and over by Maj. Gen. O. M. Barsanti, division commander, was: *maintain constant and unrelenting pressure on the enemy.*

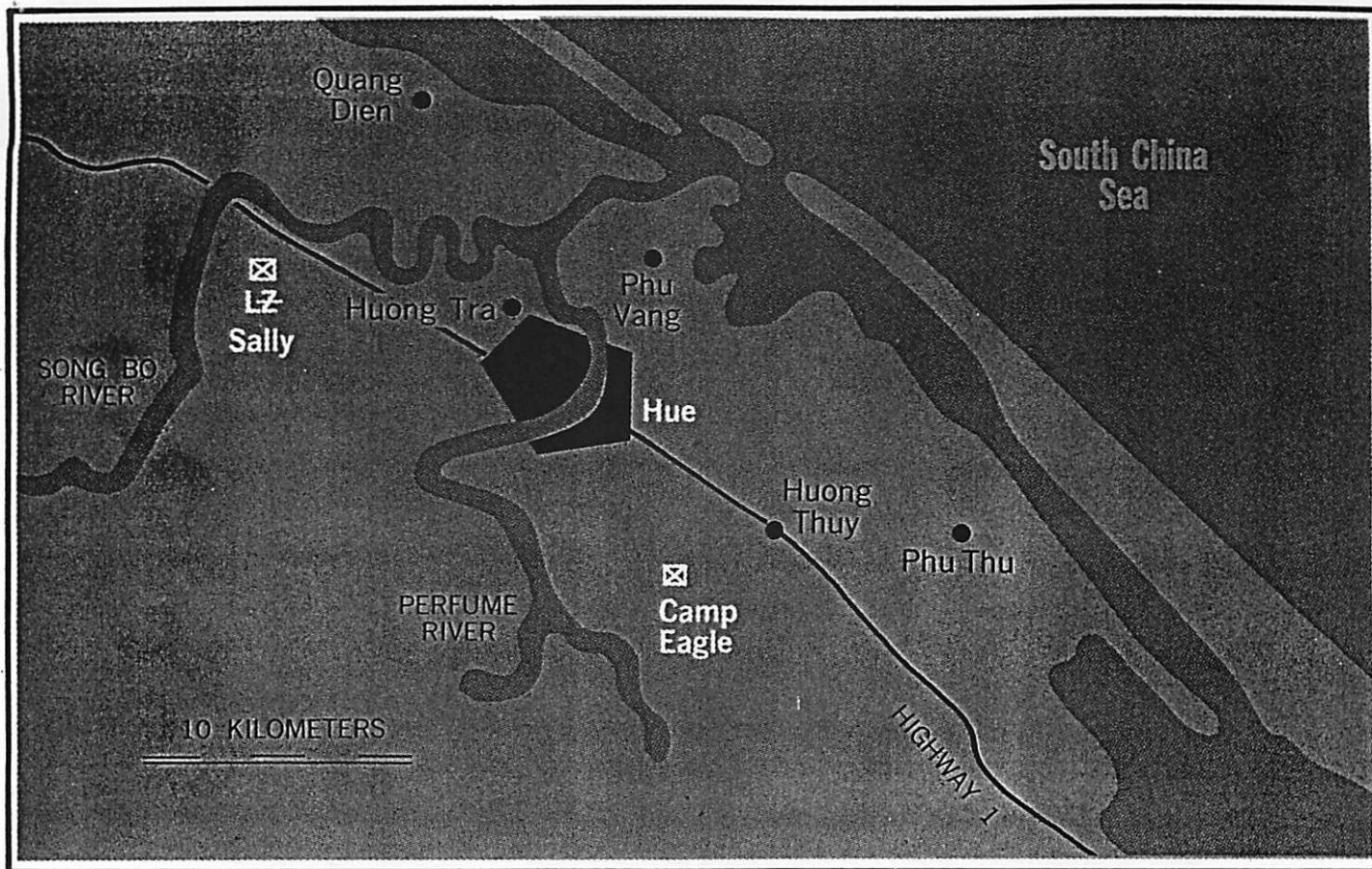
On the move day and night, we gave the enemy no rest. At night we were in ambush locations throughout the area of operations. In the daytime we were constantly searching for contact in company-size and smaller formations.

Constant movement and night ambushes are dangerous. We wanted to be careful so as not to get caught short or surprised. But at the same time, we strove for an attitude of "go get 'em, go find 'em."

When we did make contact, we acted swiftly to bring all forces to bear—supporting weapons such as artillery and air strikes besides additional platoons and companies from whatever source. Any forces not in contact were considered available for reinforcement. Gen. Barsanti kept no forces in reserve; his only reserves were lift helicopters which could swiftly move units not in contact to the area of operations.

Night moves by units of the brigade were common. On one occasion we received intelligence after dark that some NVA in Quang Dien District were going to move overland to sampans which would be waiting along the shore. I talked by telephone to the battalion commander of the 1/502d Infantry, Lt. Col. Bertram J. Bishop. Did he have someone he could put out to ambush the route? The battalion reconnaissance platoon was sent out to lie in wait and was in position by midnight. Early in the morning the enemy came by. The result: a highly successful ambush.

*'Our battalion commanders took it as their task to provide coordination for all actions in the area, from Navy patrol boats to Revolutionary Development teams.'*



*Area of operations of 2d Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, mid-March to end of June 1968.*

The results of ambushes during this period were indeed remarkable. We hurt the enemy badly.

The final operational technique that figured in the successes of the 2d Brigade was the "cordon," or encirclement. This cordon operation followed logically from the application of the first two techniques: working closely with the Vietnamese, with the resulting excellent intelligence and increased capabilities that this gave us; and constant and unrelenting pressure on the enemy day and night.

The essentials of the cordon operation were:

- Once an enemy force is located, surround it before nightfall.
- Once the enemy is surrounded, seal off all avenues of escape.
- When you have him penned in, turn night into day with constant illumination.

Our cordon operations started with improvisation. They were perfected in successive actions until we had a style that was unique and highly effective. More than a dozen successful cordon operations of the 2d Brigade from the end of March to the end of June in 1968 broke the back of NVA forces in Thua Thien Province.

We were led to the cordon principle almost by chance, as we observed and learned from a battle episode in late March.

On the 27th, the 1st Battalion, 501st Infantry, commanded by Lt. Col. Wayne J. Procup, had its command post with the district chief at Quang

Dien. Companies A and D were pursuing a company of the Viet Cong 810th Battalion over by the Perfume River. During the day, U.S. Navy river patrol forces reported to the 1/501st that 90 Viet Cong were occupying the village of Thuan Hoa on the river bank.

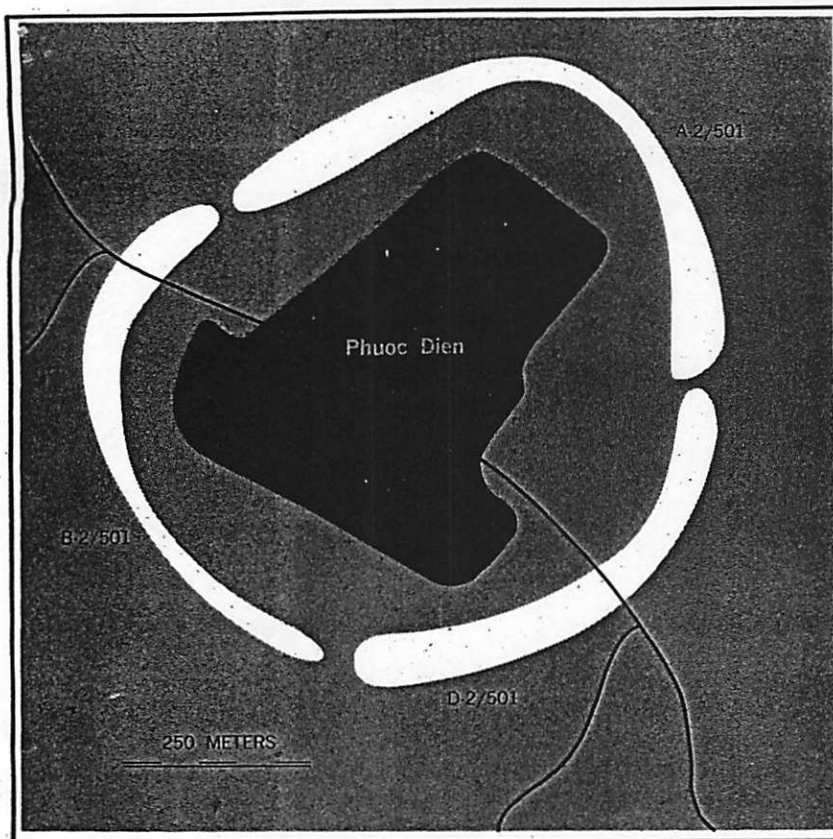
Lt. Col. Procup moved Company A overland to establish a blocking position west of the village. He sent the battalion reconnaissance platoon by helicopter to occupy a blocking position to the north. Company D was then lifted into a landing zone south of the village prepared to fight its way into the village, with the other two elements blocking.

Upon arrival in the landing zone (LZ), Company D began its move and immediately came under intense small arms fire from the village. It was clear that the place was heavily defended. The civilians were gone and the VC were in there.

Darkness was coming on, and we had too little time to assault the village that afternoon. The enemy was surrounded. We thought he had at least a company in the village. Our experience with this type of situation told us that he would try to get out during the night.

It was at this point that Lt. Col. Procup made a suggestion which was to become a key element of the successful cordon. He requested night-long illumination so that he could keep his forces in position and keep the enemy from sneaking out.

We ordered the flare ships and they came over shortly after dark. Companies A and D, and the recon platoon, spread out around the village. The



The Phuoc Dien encirclement 10-11 April 1968.

Navy patrolled the river line.

During the night, sporadic enemy small arms fire came from the village and there was scattered activity all along the cordon. At 2130, an NVA soldier was wounded and captured attempting to escape. When day broke, two more were captured. When the positions in front of the cordon were surveyed at first-light, some 20 enemy dead were found—men who had been killed trying to break out. At 0800, we brought in loudspeakers to broadcast surrender appeals, and Company D entered the village with no enemy resistance. The only signs of the enemy were the bodies of more than 30 uniformed NVA and VC.

We learned a lot from this experience. For one thing, we found that despite our attempts to surround the enemy, a substantial number succeeded in slipping away. The fact that no resistance was made to our attack the next day attested to this.

We also learned how to get and control flare ships. We found that we should call for them early and must be sure that a replacement ship was requested well ahead of time. We found it necessary to have a standby helicopter flare ship on strip alert and to prepare artillery to fill gaps in illumination.

Our next opportunity for a cordon came when we were in the 1st Cavalry Division's normal area of operations, and had taken over the AO of its 3d Brigade which had moved into Khe Sanh.

The 2/501st Infantry, commanded by Lt. Col. Richard J. Tallman, was operating out of Wunder Beach on the South China Sea. We had had intelligence from an agent that two enemy companies were entrenched in the village of Phuoc

Dien. So we went after them.

By late afternoon of 10 April, Companies A and D of 2/501st were in heavy contact but unable to penetrate the strongly defended village. It became evident that we could not take the objective that afternoon without excessive casualties. The village was too big to surround with only two companies.

Gen. Barsanti said, "stay with the enemy," and asked us what we needed. We answered, "helicopters." We got them.

Lt. Col. Tallman moved Company B by helicopter immediately. It arrived at 1840 and by 2000 the three companies had established their cordon.

This time, explicit instructions were issued: spread the cordon into the rice paddies; establish positive links between companies, have no more than ten meters between foxholes and be 100 percent alert during the night. Constant illumination was provided by flare ships and artillery.

Continuous fire from rifles, grenade launchers and machine guns from the cordon helped keep the troops awake. Between 2000 that night and 0730 the next morning, the NVA troops made at least 12 attempts to break out of this cordon. Enemy were detected moving on their bellies and much of the action was within hand-grenade range. The next morning, 36 enemy were found dead in front of the cordon positions and two prisoners were captured.

At daylight a coordinated attack on the village was made by Companies B and D, against moderate resistance.

A total of 70 North Vietnamese soldiers were killed and 13 NVA were taken prisoner in this action at Phuoc Dien. It was apparent from the prisoners and from captured documents that the 2/501st had trapped and destroyed a company-size element of the NVA 6th Battalion, 812th Regiment.

By this time we had learned that these are the basic ingredients of the cordon:

- As soon as we suspected that there was a sizable force, we must immediately move to surround it on all sides by nightfall. Enough forces have to be moved to completely ring the village, with foxholes ten meters apart and every escape path covered.

- We had to have "lights on" all night long so that the enemy—capable of slithering through a furrow or along the bank of a rice paddy—could be seen, stopped and dealt with. One of our biggest problems was to insure uninterrupted lighting. If the lights were off for as long as ten minutes or if they drifted away the enemy would take advantage of this and try to get through the cordon. This called for the closest coordination between the brigade's tactical operations center and the Air Force's flare ships.

- We had to be totally alert all night long. Everybody had to stay awake: commanders, troops, everyone. This was hard on troops who had been fighting all day and we had to allow

them to rest the next day. But what this did was to turn night into day. It made the battle a 24-hour operation and it gave the enemy no rest.

In mid-April, the 2d Brigade's command post moved back to LZ Sally and our three infantry battalions and the 2d Squadron, 17th Cavalry, took over our old operations area, still infested with NVA.

No sooner had we arrived back in our old area of operations than we had two opportunities for cordon operations in quick succession. Each of these was somewhat less than satisfactory because in both instances we were unable to close the loop completely, and there were escape routes left open for the enemy. But, even so, the enemy suffered casualties.

Then came the classic cordon operation of Phuoc Yen.

In late April, we were continuing to receive reports of large NVA units in various villages in Quang Dien and Huong Tra provinces.

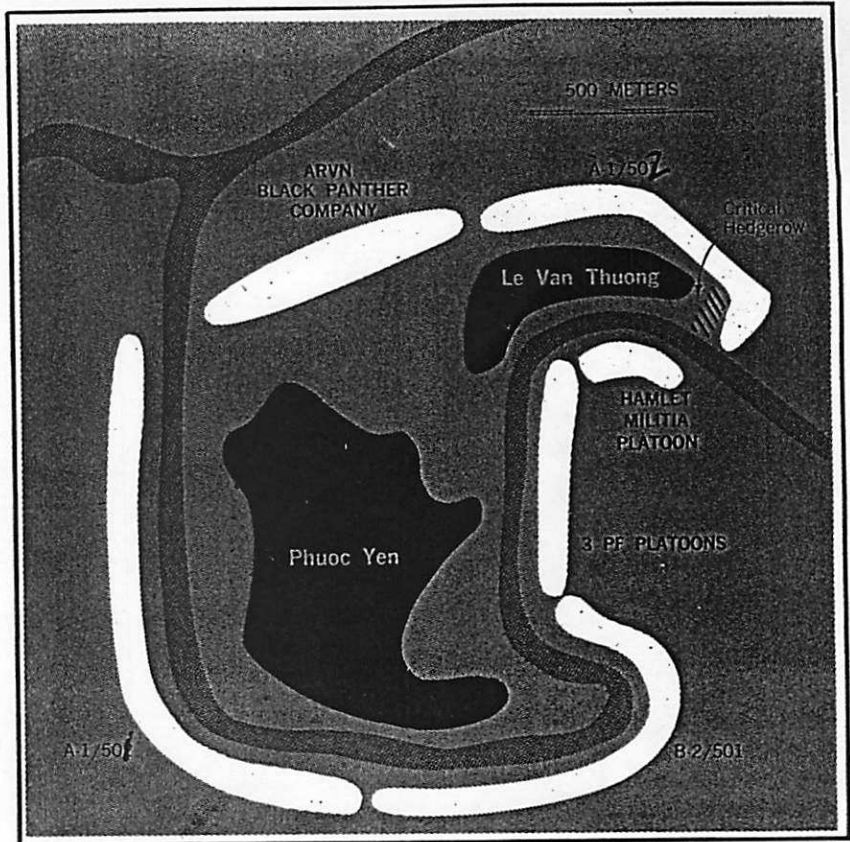
Companies of the 1/501st Infantry and local Vietnamese forces, along with the Black Panther Company of the ARVN 1st Division, were scouring the area looking for the enemy. This was slow work because each village entered was a potential defended position. Although most of the people had long been gone from this area, the NVA had dug in and were moving at night from one place to another, rarely staying in the same spot more than two nights.

At midday on 28 April, the Black Panther Company began a reconnaissance in force into the village of Phuoc Yen. While approaching the tree line they met intense fire from small arms, automatic weapons and rockets. The commander of the Black Panther Company estimated that the force in the village was of battalion size.

We immediately moved to establish a cordon around the entire enemy force. Company A of the 1/501st moved overland to establish a blocking position across the river to the west. Company B of the 2/501st was picked up by helicopter from its operating area well to the east and occupied the southern part of the blocking position along the river bank. Maj. Nguyen Huu De, Huong Tra district chief, moved three of his PF platoons to the river line to the east of the enemy force. A few civilians came out through the PF lines and the village was clear except for the enemy.

By 1800, all but some 20 percent of the perimeter was complete. We then moved Company A of the 1/502d from LZ Sally into a landing zone at the northeast edge of the perimeter. The question at this point was where to draw the perimeter. Should it include the village of Le Van Thuong or could we take that village that evening and shorten the line?

A twilight attack by Company A into Le Van Thuong met heavy fire. The village could not be taken; it must be contained within the perimeter. But by now it was getting dark. We had to drive a blocking force down to the river line, and the



river bank across from Le Van Thuong was also undefended.

Maj. De then directed the 40-man militia of the small hamlet across the river to form the cordon along that position, and Company A, 1/502d, moving in the early hours of the night, drove a platoon along a hedgerow all the way to the river line, sealing the last escape route.

This final action of Company A, 1/502d, was crucial, because the cordon's success completely depends on closing every last escape route. There can be no way left for the enemy to wriggle out of the trap. If there is, he will find it and an entire battalion can slip away.

By 2000 that night, a ring was drawn around the entire enemy battalion—the largest net we had ever drawn in a cordon. Included in it were one company of the 1/501st; one company of the 2/501st; one company of the 1/502d; the Black Panther Company of the ARVN 1st Division; three Popular Forces platoons from Huong Tra District; and 40 hamlet militiamen. All were under the operational control of Lt. Col. Jim I. Hunt, CO of the 1/501st, a brand-new battalion commander who had taken over only two days earlier and was doing a superlative job in his first Vietnam action.

We had close liaison with each of the Vietnamese units through an officer or NCO equipped with a radio. Each surrounding unit had its instructions: foxholes ten meters apart, 100 percent alert, don't let anyone get out.

When we turned the lights on that night the enemy knew he was trapped. He had seen this tactic used against others in the area and now it was being used against him.

The first night encirclement of Phuoc Yen on 28-29 April 1968.



Troopers of Company D, 2/501, move cautiously along a hedgerow in encirclement operation.

*“There can be no way left to the enemy to wriggle out of the cordon’s trap. If there is, he will find it and an entire battalion can slip away.”*

During the night, scattered firing was heard from the enemy inside the cordon. We had a hunch that he would try to use the escape route by the river line which had been sealed off by Company A, 1/502d. At about 0500 his breakout attempt began. Three separate attempts were made to rupture Company A’s left flank. All were repulsed by a strong and courageous defense and the next morning the enemy was still trapped.

Company A then resumed its attack, attempting to gain a foothold in the northeastern section of Le Van Thuong. This was met with heavy fire from entrenched and camouflaged positions; the company pulled back and adjusted artillery on the position. That day, the Black Panther Company also advanced into Phuoc Yen where they made heavy contact. Later that evening, we brought another company of the 2/501st into the cordon.

The cordon was again sealed throughout the night of 29-30 April under constant illumination. Small arms and automatic weapons fire was exchanged in the darkness as the enemy tried to find a gap in the position. There was no gap to be found.

On the third day, 30 April, we continued to probe the enemy position and to pound him with artillery and tactical air strikes. That evening, the Black Panther Company was airlifted from the cordon back to another operational commitment in the vicinity of Hue.

Throughout the night of 30 April, the cordon was maintained under constant illumination. In the early morning of 1 May, there was a break in illumination when a flare ship ran out of lights before its replacement had arrived. In the interim, while artillery provided illumination, it was darker in front of the left flank of Company A, 1/502d.

Between 0500 and 0600, the enemy attacked the left flank of Company A in a final desperate attempt to penetrate and escape the perimeter. This attack cost the lives of three men of Company A but failed in its purpose. 84

Dawn came and the enemy defenses opposite Company A, 1/502d, began to crumble. A psychological warfare team was on hand and began broadcasting appeals to surrender. Among the first group of prisoners was an NVA sergeant. He was handed the microphone and began to broadcast, telling his own men that they were surrounded. In a few minutes, increasing numbers of prisoners began to surrender.

By noon, it was possible to move through Le Van Thuong. Company A, 1/502d, did so and that afternoon was extricated and returned to LZ Sally. It was replaced in the shortened cordon by Company B, 2/501st.

For three more days the cordon was maintained with the enemy making futile attempts to break out. Finally, during the early morning of 3 May, he made his last attempt, was repulsed again and the cordon ended.

The results were decisive. The enemy suffered more than 400 men killed. Even more significantly, 107 prisoners were taken—the largest number of NVA captured in any single action that far in the war. An entire NVA battalion—the 8th of the 90th Regiment—was eliminated and great quantities of equipment were seized. The total losses among friendly forces were eight American and two Vietnamese soldiers killed and 56 wounded.

We learned a number of lessons in this operation. One was that when streams flow through a cordon, the men on the banks must be positioned out into the stream—actually with “one foot in the water.” They must have visual contact with troopers on the opposite bank. Hand grenades and grenade launchers must be fired into the water to discourage swimmers.

This decisive and remarkable victory terrified NVA and VC troops in our area of operations and we kept the pressure up.

Intelligence taken during the Phuoc Yen cordon indicated that the trapped enemy battalion had called for reinforcements to move into the area of Op Pho Nam hamlet, so the 2d Brigade went looking there. The 2/501st and the 1/502d conducted two successful cordons in this area during the next two days and destroyed the trapped North Vietnamese.

On 5 May, the 2/501st was operating with one company of the 1/501st in the vicinity of La Chu. The night before, ARVN positions near Hue had been attacked, and Vietnamese sources reported that one of the company-size units involved was in La Chu. A probe of the village confirmed the information. We decided to surround and destroy it with a cordon. By nightfall, the cordon was firmly established with two battalions participating. Elements of the 2/501st, now commanded by Lt. Col. James A. Heiter, held the northern part of the objective; the 2nd Squadron, 17th Cavalry, was on the south. Once again the enemy was trapped.

The next day, both battalions attacked. Prog-

ress was slow because of the network of bunkers and trenches in the village. Just as the day was ending, the enemy's main positions were finally located by the 2d Squadron, 17th Cavalry. The cavalry troopers, under Lt. Col. Julius W. Becton, squadron commander, then continued the attack under the light of flares. At 0100, the final series of bunkers was overrun. This attack by the 2/17th Cavalry and under illumination—using infantry, armored personnel carriers and tanks until the last enemy resistance was eliminated—was a "first," to my knowledge.

In mid-May 1968, the 2d Brigade's area of operations was extended to the east of Hue into the districts of Phu Vang, Huong Thuy and Phu Thu.

According to now well-established brigade standing operating procedure, we moved the 1/501st Infantry's command post right alongside that of the district chief of Phu Vang, and immediately put into effect our concept of working with the Vietnamese, maintaining pressure day and night and conducting cordon operations. A few days later, the 2/17th Cavalry joined us east of Hue.

Working with the ARVN 1st Division's units in the area, and with the local and Regional Forces of Thua Thien in a series of operations, within a few weeks these two units of the 2d Brigade destroyed the NVA in the area and drove them out.

Several cordon operations were conducted in rapid succession by the 1/501st and the 2/17th. One of these, during the night of 30-31 May, can be described as typical.

During the morning of 30 May, the 2/17th Cavalry made contact with enemy elements at the western end of the village of Le Xa Dong. By noon, it became evident that a strong enemy force was occupying the village. Sensing an opportunity to encircle and destroy this force, we moved a rifle company of the 2/17th and a platoon of the 1/501st into position north of the village and arranged with the ARVN 1st Division to order the nearby 3d Battalion of its 3d Regiment to a cordon position west and northwest of the village. By nightfall, the U.S.-ARVN cordon was established. Throughout the night the trapped enemy attempted in vain to break out and the next morning his defeat was complete.

The enemy's losses were 156 killed and 41 prisoners. We had also destroyed the command groups of a battalion and of a regiment.

In early June, Lt. Col. Becton's 2/17th Cavalry set up a command post at Phu Thu District, together with a tactical command post element from the ARVN 1st Division, including repre-



President Thieu presents the Cross of Gallantry with Palm to the 2d Brigade and its commander on RVN Armed Forces Day, 19 June 1968.

sentatives from Thua Thien Province. The 2d Brigade also provided a small command and communications element at this district town. Among its other missions, this U.S.-Vietnamese command center was coordinating the rice harvest plan for Phu Thu District and neighboring areas. The Allied mission was to destroy any NVA and VC forces that still remained in the area.

For the next two weeks, this U.S.-Vietnamese force roamed through Phu Thu District completing the defeat of NVA and VC forces in the area. Cordon operations along the coast were supported by U.S. Navy river patrol boats. By the middle of June, Phu Thu, Phu Vang and Huong Thuy districts were essentially clear and the NVA had been eliminated from the eastern approaches to Hue, as he had previously been driven from the western approaches.

That was how we did it in Thua Thien: work with the Vietnamese, give the enemy no rest, and encircle him at every opportunity.

We had many operations besides encirclements, of course. There were hundreds of actions, major and minor, during this period. But the encircling cordon typified the style and technique of the 2d Brigade.

The cordons were not without their cost. Twenty-eight men of the brigade and six Vietnamese soldiers were killed in action during the encirclement operations. But the cost was far greater to the enemy with whom we came in contact. More than 1,200—eighty percent of them North Vietnamese—were killed during the cordons, and 252 prisoners—also 80 percent NVA—were taken.

The NVA enemy was driven from the area. He has not returned. The stage was set for the next phase: eliminating the Viet Cong and restoring peace, security and serenity to the countryside.



**Cordon Operations, 2d Brigade, 101st Airborne Division -- March-June, 1968**

DRAFT

<u>Nr</u>	<u>Control Hqs</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Village</u>	<u>Grid</u>	<u>Enemy Unit</u>	<u>US Losses</u>		<u>Enemy Losses</u>	<u>Materiel Taken</u>
						<u>KHA</u>	<u>WHA</u>		
1	1-501	26-28 March	Thon Thua Hoa	YD769309	Elements 810 LF Bn	2	24	31 NVA KIA 18 VC KIA 3 NVA PW	10 indiv wpns 5400 lb rice
2	2-501	10-11 April	Thon Phuoc Dien	YD475485	Elements 6th Bn, 812 NVA Regt	7	35	70 NVA KIA 13 NVA PW	24 indiv wpns 7 crew-svd wpns 100 lb rice
3	1-501	17-18 April	Ap Ny Xa Ap Dong Xuyen	YD723314	Elements 803 NVA Regt	1	13	48 NVA KIA	10 indiv wpns 4000 lb rice
4	2-501	21-24 April	Kim Doi Thon Than Trung -1	YD748305 YD755313	Elements 803 NVA Regt		12	70 NVA KIA 13 NVA PW	11 indiv wpns 1 crew-svd wpn
5	1-501	28 April- 4 May	Thon Phuoc Yen	YD687283 YD690277	8th Bn, 90th NVA Regt	8 2*	44 12*	314 NVA KIA 115 NVA KIA* 107 NVA PW	88 indiv wpns 15 crew-svd wpns 7 indiv wpns* 7 crew-svd wpns* Bn radios and SOI
							*ARVN		
6	1-502	3-5 May	Ap Nam Phu Ap Pho Nam	YD690300	Elements 1st Bn, 803d Regiment	3	14	31 NVA KIA 2 VC KIA 2 NVA PW	4 indiv wpns 1 crew-svd wpn

86

20 July 1995

DRAFT

Nr	Control		Village	Grid	Enemy Unit	US Losses		Enemy Losses	Materiel Taken
	Hqs	Date				KHA	WHA		
7	2-501 2-17 Cav	5-7 May	Thon La Chu	YD693241	Elements C115 LF Co Co, 9th Bn, 90th NVA Regt	2	14	53 NVA/VC KIA 1 NVA PW 2 VC PW	23 indiv wpns 3 crew-svd wpns 400 lb rice
8	1-501	19-21 May	Thon Lang Xa Bau	YD839210	Elements 810 LF Bn		12	65 NVA/VC KIA 1 NVA PW 1 VC PW	12 wpns total
9	1-501	27-28 May	Thon Xuan Hoa	YD805227	Elements C117 LF Co		1	2 NVA KIA 2 VC KIA 2 NVA PW 1 VC PW	12 indiv wpns 750 lb rice
10	2-17 Cav	30-31 May	Thon Le Xa Dong	YD884228	Elements 810 LF Bn		6	91 NVA/VC KIA 7 NVA PW 12 VC PW 65 NVA/VC KIA* 22 VC PW*	30 indiv wpns 6 crew-svd wpns 30 indiv wpns* 9 crew-svd wpns*
						2*	2*		
							*ARVN		
11	2-17 Cav	1-4 June	Trung Phuong Thon Moc Tru Thon Trung Ha	YD884228 YD967173 YD975163	Elements K4 MF Bn K10 LF Bn C118 LF Co	5	38	38 NVA/VC KIA 90 VC KIA 18 NVA PW 40 VC PW 107 NVA/VC KIA* 19 VC PW*	54 indiv wpns 24 crew-svd wpns 31 indiv wpns* 5 crew-svd wpns* 15,000 lb rice
						2*	5*		
							*ARVN		

87

20 July 1995

## **Chapter 7. Camp Evans; March 30 - April 14, 1968**

Entry 41 in the brigade journal for March 30th, with a Camp Evans dateline, was..."1200; 2d Bde CP open 1200 hours."

The troops were on the move. Thus began Carentan II.

The 101st Airborne Division was extending its area of operations to the north in order to free the 1st Cavalry Division for a division-scale "airmobile raid" that would relieve the pressure on the beleaguered Marine outpost at Khe Sanh, which was just north of Highway 9 in the far northwest corner of the Republic of Vietnam. The Marine regiment's situation there had long been desperate; with two NVA divisions facing them, they were cut off by road, pounded by heavy and light artillery and mortars, under frequent ground attack, and barely hanging on. The crisis of the Tet Offensive was past, but Khe Sanh was becoming a major crisis for Lyndon B. Johnson, President of the United States.

Earlier in March General Abrams, deputy commander of MACV, had told General Tolson to begin detailed planning for a lightning aerial offensive that would support an ARVN/ Marine relief column. Under the supervision of Brigadier General Oscar Davis, ADC, the Cav build a major base at LZ Stud, with runway, ammunition storage, and refueling. D-day for launching Operation Pegasus was 31 March. As the brigades and supporting artillery of the 1st Air Cav moved out in air assault, opening seven new landing zones in five days, the 2d Brigade, 101st, moved in to take their places.

At LZ Sally, we had known only that the Cav had gone north and that, displacing the 2d Brigade CP to Camp Evans, we would take over their AO from Evans as far north as LZ Jane and Hai Lang. We would leave the 1/501 in its AO in the north of our old 2d Brigade AO, and would leapfrog over the 1/501 with the 1/502, 2/17, and 2/501, who would in turn be replaced by battalions of the 3d Brigade, 82d Airborne Division. An ARVN task force would take the place of the Cav's forces that would soon be absent from the Quang Tri area. And the 3d/82d Brigade would take over our CP at Sally.

On March 30th the 1/502 and 2/17th moved by motor and air, with the 1/502 going into Camp Evans to assume responsibility for its security (A/1/502 had earlier been assigned a special mission, opcon to the 3d Marine Division at Dong Ha), and the 2/17th likewise into Camp Evans but assuming responsibility for AO Mann nearby.

On April 1st the 2/501, which had been temporarily under 3d/82d's opcon, completed its move to Utah Beach, secured the fire support base Hardcore there, and took charge of its new AO along the Street Without Joy. On April 2d, the 2/327 Inf, from the 1st Brigade, moved into LZ Jane and took over the AO nearby, including Hai Lang.

From the brigade journal of 1 April...

"1705 2-501: D Co closed Utah Beach at 1650 hours"

D Company had come in by CH-47; the remainder of the battalion arrived the same day by motor march. A/2/501st and C/1/321 Arty occupied FSB Hardcore not far from Hai Lang, with a range fan that included Utah Beach and the road from there to Hai Lang.

From Cleo Hogan's diary...

*April 4*

*Unbelievable. I'm setting here watching the ocean break on the sands at a place called Utah Beach. We arrived here the 31st and are providing security for a Navy Depot. They are unloading ships day and night. The company gets to go swimming about every afternoon, then pulls guard duty at night. A few rocket or mortar rounds each night but nothing serious.*

*5 April*

*Nothing much going on. Hasn't been any enemy sighted in over a week. Company found some booby traps... Company is up to 120 men, the most I have ever had. We're getting two hot meals each day now.*

Our units were adapting to their new missions, establishing contact with the locals and with adjacent units, reporting their new locations, clearing assigned roads, guarding assigned bridges, carrying out local RIFs, and placing ambushes out each night. The brigade journal for the 31st... "Friendly losses: None. Enemy assessment: Unknown."

We would for some time now have the 2/17 Cav under brigade opcon. Commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Julius W. Becton, Jr.,<sup>1</sup> the 2/17 had two ground troops, each with a rifle platoon, and each troop with platoons of jeep mounted machine guns and 106mm recoilless rifles. B/2/17 also owned six M113 armored personnel carriers, each of which mounted one .50 cal. and two light machine guns. Squadron headquarters company had 81mm mortars and an aero rifle platoon (ARP). The 2/17 soon gained a platoon of M-48 tanks from C/3/5th Cav, and a Marine Ontos company which was equipped with 1/4 ton trucks, each of which carried six 106mm recoilless rifles.

Based then at Camp Evans, the 2/17 traveled to its new AO by conducting a two day coordinated squadron RIF operation in the dune country along the Street Without Joy, arriving in the vicinity of Hai Lang on April 2d. The squadron order, copied on the next three pages, gives an idea of how the 2/17th with its two ground troops operated.

---

<sup>1</sup>Julius Becton retired in 1983 after a career that took him to lieutenant general and command of VII Corps in Germany. He was until 1994 president of Prairie View A&M University, Texas.

DECLASSIFIED PER EXECUTIVE ORDER 12356, SECTION 3.3, NND PROJECT NUMBER WWD 873541, BY D.M.J. I.R.B., DATE 7-11-95

**CONFIDENTIAL**

(CLASSIFICATION)

Copy 14 of 15 Copies  
2d Squadron (Abn), 17th Cavalry  
Camp Evans (YD52312), RVN  
311600 March 1968  
YZ 51

OPORD 11-68

References: Map, 1:50,000, Sheet 6142 II.

Task Organization:

A/2/17 (CPT Hartjens, Cndg)  
2d Platoon, A/5/5 Cav  
Radar Team (DS)  
Engr Mine Sweep Team

TF CONTROLS:  
1 CAC UH-1H  
1 H-23  
1 UH-1H (Log Ship)  
Aero Rifle Platoon

B/2/17 (CPT Bazzello, Cndg)  
Radar Team (DS)  
Engr Mine Sweep Team

1. SITUATION:

- a. Enemy Forces: See Current INTBM.
- b. Friendly Forces: 2/101 Bde continues to secure Camp Evans off Hwy 1 in AO. CG, 1/502 Inf, assumes responsibility for anti mine sub via YD593906 to YD606312, for security for bridge at YD519319, and for security of designated mine sweep teams on Hwy 1 effective 311330 Hrs, March 1968.
- c. Attachments & Detachments: Task Organization.

2. MISSION:

TF 2/17 Cavalry will conduct a reconnaissance in force into the village complex along road from YD582117 to YD611393 to locate and destroy VC/NVA forces and supplies found therein.

3. EXECUTION:

- a. Concept of Operation: Annex B (Overlay) TF 2/17 Cavalry will attack with two troops abreast, A/2/17 on Axis ABLE and B/2/17 on Axis BAKER to seize objectives A and B. On order, A/2/17 will seize objective B. B/2/17 will be prepared to reinforce the attack. TF 2/17 Cavalry will be prepared to ROM via YD5738.
- b. Fires: Annex C (Fire Support) Priority of fires to B 2/17.

**CONFIDENTIAL**

(CLASSIFICATION)

DOWNGRADED TO  
FOUO UPON  
EXECUTION

**CONFIDENTIAL**

(CLASSIFICATION)

GROUP 1-68  
EXD 11-68  
EXD 11-68

- (1) Attack on Axis ABIR, seize objective A.
- (2) GHO seize objective C.
- (3) GHO secure Western half of TP NDP via YD575385.

- (1) Attack on Axis BAKER, seize objective B.
- (2) GHO reinforce attack on objective C.
- (3) GHO secure Eastern half of TP NDP via YD575385.

- (1) Reinforce CP at bridge via YD176976.
- (2) Establish nightily ambush via YD1896.
- (3) Be prepared to reinforce A/2/17 or B/2/17 by helicopter assault.

- (1) Secure mine sweep teams in sector.

Coordinate the instructions:

- (1) Route to Attack Positions: Route Red. Order of March: A/2/17.
- (2) TO available in GHO EMP, airborne at 0630 hours.

ADMINISTRATION AND LOGISTICS:

- a. Medical evacuation on call through REIKVAD BRVAO, fixed 16.00 or 15.70.
- b. Logistical resupply will be by UR-10.

5. DEMAND AND SUPPLY:

Current SSI & SSI in effect:

**CONFIDENTIAL**

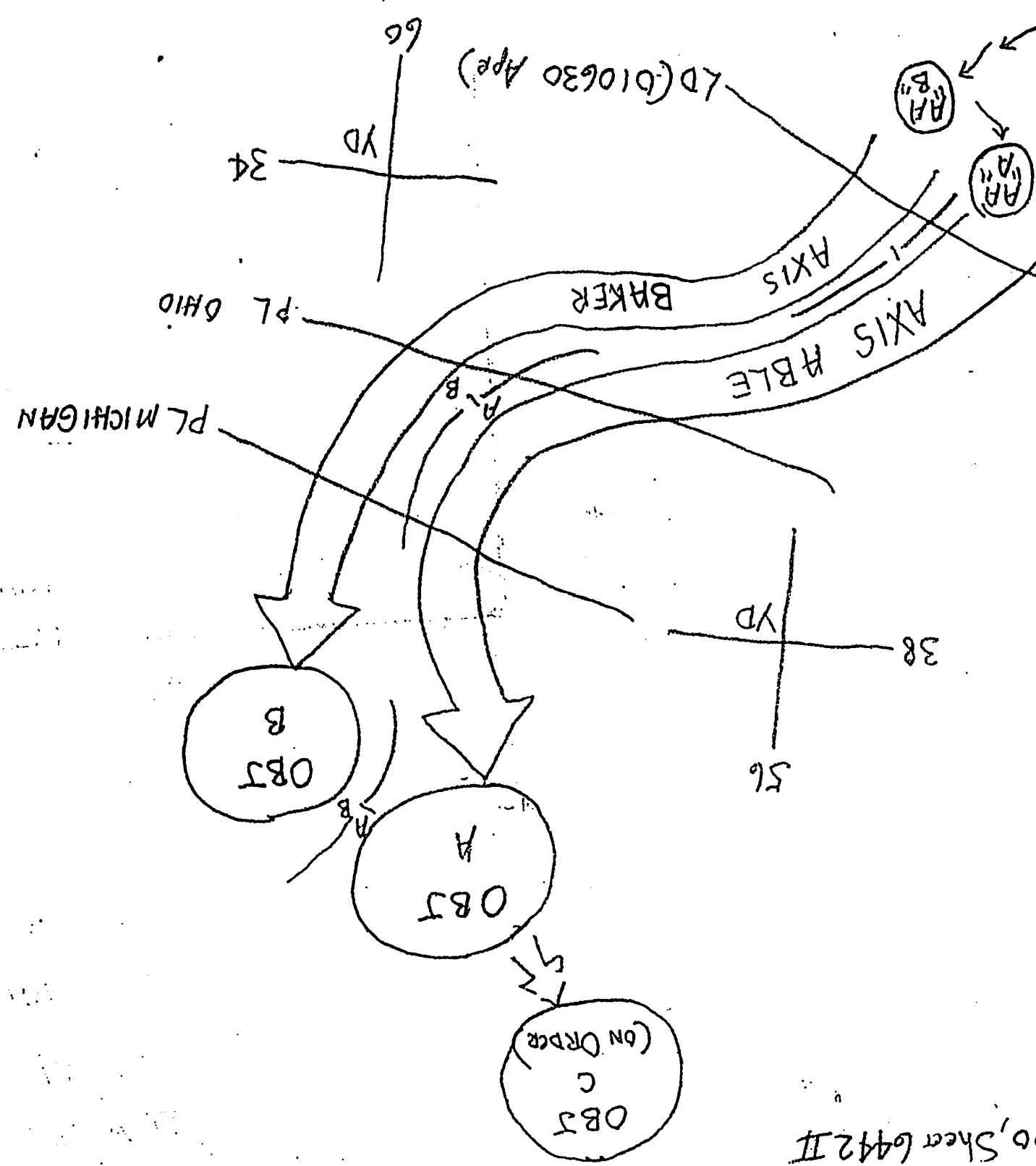
(CLASSIFICATION)

Downgraded to  
FOUO upon  
EXECUTION:

OFFICE OF  
H. J. AD

CONFIDENTIAL

DISTRIBUTION: Same as  
OPORD 11-68



1  
2  
CA  
31  
YZ

The journal for 1 April reported little activity other than routine. A road mine damaged the S-3 jeep of the 2/17, with two wounded. There was no other contact.

The 1-501 sent brigade this report of its activities th<sup>4</sup> day in the AO of the 3d/82d. It reflects that a lot goes on in a rifle company daily, that often gets summarized in a couple of lines or a short paragraph.

FROM: CO, 1st Bn (ACM), 2nd Lt, 1st Bn, RVN

TO: CO, 3d Bde, 82 Abn Div

SITREP FOR PERIOD 311730H - 011730H Apr 68

1. (C) OPERATIONAL SUMMARY

a. A - 1-501: At 311745H Mar 68 A/1-501 found one body at YD716310. Believe to be Chinese doctor as he was wearing a medical jacket under his NVA fatigues. A/1-501 established CP at YD716311, 311845H and positioned squad size ambushes at YD714315, YD723311 and YD712313 at 312006H, A/1-501 discovered freshly dug mortar position, ten feet in dia, with trench connecting to bunker at YD716311, 312035H. Ambush patrols closed CP 010740H Apr 68 with neg contact. A/1-501 commenced search and destroy mission at 010805H with suspected NVA hospital YD723313 as objective. At 011035H A/1-501 found hospital location at YD723313. Hospital appeared to have been destroyed 2-3 days ago by demolition. Hospital was underground with bamboo and tin sewing as reinforcement for walls. A trench from hospital to canal was found. At 011130H, 2,800lbs of bagged rice and 2,000lbs of loose rice were found via YD723303. At 011215H, 200lbs of bagged rice were found in sampan at YD723313.

b. B - 1-501: At 311800H B/1-501 establish CP via YD705315 and squad size ambushes were emplaced YD706318, YD702314, YD703312 at YD703312 received grenades and small arms fire from est enemy platoon resulting in 2 MIA. Ambushes pulled back to CP neg enemy casualties. At 312055H B/1-501 received small arms and RPG fire from YD707315 from est enemy platoon. Neg friendly casualties. Ambushes closed CP 010755H Apr 68. Platoon size sweeps 500 meters W and S commenced 010700H Apr 68. Platoon sweeping W found blood trails via YD705315. Both sweeps completed 010805H Apr 68 with no additional finds. At 010950H B/1-501 received 2 bursts automatic weapon fire from YD707310. Called Arty. Results unk. At 011224H B/1-501 received 1 RPG round from via YD711316. Negative friendly casualties. Located at YD702327 at 011600H moving East negative contact at this time. At 011614H Apr 68 B/1-501 received sniper fire (ineffective) from YD698334. (Gimpy) also fire from this location at 011616H. FAC spotted 10-15 VC in grave yard YD708335H at 011619H. At 011630H B/1-501 apprehended one detainee at YD703327. Evac to Quang Dien District Hqs for interrogation. Neg further enemy contact through 011730H.

c. C - 1-501: Unit continues improvement of defensive positions via An Lo Bridge. At 010930H Apr 68 platoon size sweeps commenced NE to YD608283 and SW to YD637307. Element sweeping SW received two rounds of small arms fire from YD616307, at 011156 Apr 68. Fire returned. Negative enemy casualties. Neg friendly cas. Both platoons on the sweep mission closed CP 011600H Apr 68.

d. D - 1-501: At 311800H Mar 68, D/1-501 established CP at YD736317. Squad size ambushes were emplaced at YD739319 and YD724315 at 311950H. Neg enemy contact. Ambushes closed CP 010711H Apr 68. At 011048H one platoon moved NE to YD727314. Co (-) remained CP awaiting log extraction. At 011105H D/1-501 sighted 12 VC walking into village YD735327. Arty called. Results unk. D/b-501 moved and closed YD729315 at 011640H.



On 2 April the 2/327 travelled by convoy from Gia Le in the 1st Brigade AO to LZ Jane, closing its artillery and most of the battalion by dark. The 2d Brigade task force had one friendly KIA all day, incurred when an enlisted man from C Company, 326 Engineer Battalion, stepped from his jeep onto a land mine in the road. The 1/501 continued operations in its 3d/82d AO, negative assessment.

On 3 April the enemy harassed the 2/327 on LZ Jane's perimeter. From the brigade journal...

"0408 To 101st ALO (USAF air liaison officer): Request flare ship illum LZ Jane.

"0415 Bde CO: Informed duty officer to call 101st ALO and cancel flare ship."

On April 3d, A Co 1/502 returned from its special (unexplained) mission at Dong Ha. That night the 1/502 sprung an ambush, one trooper wounded and 1 VC KIA, one PW.

Division advised us that effective April 3d Utah Beach would be known as Wunder Beach, evidently for someone by that name. On the 4th, the 1/501 reported little action, but that they had found 9 NVA bodies.

From the brigade journal for April 5th, at 1810...

G3 101: CG directed LTC Garrison to call the 2d Bde S3 and tell him the Bde is shooting too much arty without any kills, used 1400 rds today."

There were no doubt enemy in our area, but we were not making contact with them yet. Back in our old AO, however, there was action. In brigade journal entry 16, April 5th, the 1/501 reported on a 4 April action by the 2d Bn, 3d ARVN Regiment...

		1945 hrs 1-501 received a wrap up report for	
		2-3 ARVN vic YD682285 - ARVN made contact with	
		a NVA force believed to be part of 312 Div -	
		4 or 1st Regt - 12th Bn - (Info captured	
		led to this effect) - results - 71 NVA KIA	
		(BC) 18 SA weapons, 2 LMGS, 1 hand MG and one	
		unidentified heavy cal weapon - all NVA	
		were carrying protective masks - observed many	
		secondary explosions - vic YD682285 - believe	
		poss POL point - friendly losses 40 ARVN	
		wounded - 10 killed.	

Of interest is this Quang Tri Sector operation plan, worked out with the 2/501. It called for helilifting into VC hamlets along Wunder Beach an armed propaganda team from province, a band for entertainment, a medcap (medical treatment team), and two PF platoons from Hai Lang, plus squads of national police and some Kit Carson scouts. U.S. Navy swift boats would screen the operation from seaward. The purpose was to make friends (not an easy task among villagers who had lived for generations along the Viet Minh dominated Street Without Joy). The operation was carried out on April 8th.

OPPLAN 1

Copy No. 408  
 Quang Tri Sector  
 YD 338533  
 On 1700 April 68  
 QT Northside

Reference: Map, Vietnam 1:50,000, Hai Lang sheet 6442 II and NCO SA DONG sheet overlay: Annex A

**TASK Organization:**

<u>TF RF</u>	<u>TF PFF</u>	<u>2/501</u>	<u>Fin New Hope</u>
101 RF Co	PFFCo	Co A	APT Tm
125 RF Co	PFF Plt	Co B	Med Cap Tm
Kit Carson	C G Tm	Inf Plt	Entertainment
	DOICO Tm		Food Team
	PSB		RD Tm

**1. Situation**

a. Enemy Forces: Current INTSUM

b. Friendly Forces:

(1) Sector initiates plan H-hour, D-day to Cordon/Search Hai An Khe villages vic YD (5155) (5153) (5152) (5153).

(2) 2/501 Abn Bn (-) Cordons Thon Trung An and Thon Tham Khe hamlets YD (5253) (5352) NLT 080600 April.

(3) Naval Element at Wunder Beach screens eastern flank of Hai An, Hai Khe villages YD 5155 to 5553 from 080600 April to termination of operation.

(4) Mevevac supports operation (Freq 49.30)

c. Attachments and Detachments: TASK ORG.

d. Assumptions:

(1) Thon Tan An, My Thuy hamlets YD 5154 Non Hostile.

(2) Thon Trung An and Thon Tham Khe hamlets contain booby traps.

(3) Villagers of Trung An and Tham Khe initially will be hostile and fearful, but will become cooperative upon understanding intent of operation.

2. Mission: Section in conjunction with 2/501 Abn Bn (-) and naval support conduct Cordon/Search, County Fair Operation 080600 April in Hai Lang Sub sector for purpose of population control.
3. Execution:
  - a. Concept of Operation: Annex A Operation Overlay. 2/501 Abn Bn (-) moves into position by foot to Cordon Trung An and Tham Khe villages; RF Companies/Kit Carson move by helicopter from Hai Lang District HQ to objective "A" and conduct clearing operation; PFF elements move by helicopter from La Vang to objective "A" and conduct Search/Classification operation; "New Hope Tm moves by helicopter from La Vang to objective "B" and conduct Country Fair Activities Commencing at 081300 hours April.
  - b. 2/501 Companies; Move into position at H-hour, D-day.
  - c. TF RF : Commence clearing operation H-hour, D-day.
  - d. TF PFF; Commence Search/Classification operation H-hour, D-day.
  - e. Tm "New Hope": Commence <sup>County</sup> ~~County~~ Fair activity H-hour, D-day.
  - f. Coordination Instructions:
    - (1) Report the enemy use of booby traps.
    - (2) Report the presence of VC in village.
    - (3) Medevac available on call.
    - (4) 2/501 Abn Bn (-) and Hai Lang Sub Sector arty available on call.
    - (5) All coordination and reporting will be effected with Hai Lang Sub Sector Commander.
    - (6) Duration of operation is one day. Hai Lang Sub Sector command will advise on termination.
    - (7) Effective for planning on receipt; for execution on order.
4. Administration/Logistics and supply:
  - a. Supply:
    - Class 1: Cords
    - Class 2/4: Payop kit - RD Team.
    - Tents - Cords
    - Helicopters - 2/501 Abn
    - Leaflets - Cords
5. Command and Signal

The April 4th brigade summary contained these items on the 2/501st...

(3) Co C. Conducted amphibious assault utilizing 1 BARC from WUNDER BEACH to vic YD546526. Conducted cordon and search in village vic YD540525. Conducted RIF operations from village to WUNDER BEACH. Negative casualties. Negative enemy assessment.

(4) Co D. PF squad attached. Conducted RIF operation in AO. Moved by truck to YD462523. Conducted RIF operations to YD445535, YD462530. Continued operations to WUNDER BEACH. Negative casualties. Negative enemy assessment.

(5) Recon Plt. Provided security for minesweep team from WUNDER BEACH to FSB HADCORE. Prepared for future operations. Negative casualties. Negative enemy assessment.

That day, April 4th, all companies of 1/502 and all but one of the 2/327 reported no contact, and "negative casualties; negative enemy assessment." The 2d Brigade had four wounded all day, all from mines.

However, in 5 April's journal, the 1/501 reported a serious engagement on the 4th.

26	0503		From 1-501: wrap up on yesterday's activities. A Co YD648297 found graves - 6 NVA bodies - 2 days old - killed by NAP & Arty.		
			1254 Co A YD697297 - engaged 1 NVA in bunker		
			results - 3 NVA POW's - 2 AK-47's, 2 M16's,		
			2 RFG'2's. 1358 A Co YD700296 - 2 NVA		
			ran in bunker - 3 came out gave up - 1 more		
			is in bunker - killed. 1505 - losses - 15		
			WIA, 3 KIA, 3 MIA - Arty all night at		
			YD686307.		

Although April 5th was another day of light activity, our S-2, Major Ray Riggan, was not letting us forget the enemy. From a page of his intelligence estimate of April 5th...

REPRODUCED AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

## CONFIDENTIAL

Appendix 1 (Agent Reports, 191st MID) to 2d Brigade, 101st Airborne Division  
INTSUM 96268

1. By order of the Tri-Thien Military Region Commander, the VC have organized five to seven armed "assault propaganda teams" in each district. Each team consists of three or four members. The teams are controlled by their district, which provides the propaganda materials, posters etc. In some cases local guerrilla forces and villages may have one or two teams, also controlled by Tri-Thien Military Region. Mission of the propaganda teams is to turn the people against the GVN and the Americans, destroy all evidences of the GVN in areas they control, and teach the people songs of the revolution. Activities of the teams include stopping civilian busses to propagandize the people, infiltrate the GVN controlled areas at night, make speeches by loudspeakers, pass out propaganda, and post propaganda signs, flag, pictures and placards. Sources believe that there are at present three teams at Quang Tri and one team at Phong Dien, one at Quang Dien and one at Phu Vang (C-3)

2. On 3 April 1968, all hamlet guerrillas living along the Song O Lau (River) from Pho Trach #1 (YD439435) north to Ap Van Trinh (YD515469) came to the Dong My-Pho Trach area (YD509437) to join with the Than Phong District Force Company and an NVA company, not further identified, to form a new battalion, unit designation unknown. Strength of the battalion will be 320 men, including 117 from Than Phong Co, 150 from the NVA Co, and 53 Hamlet guerrillas. Villagers from Phong Binh Village have been ordered to cook food for the unit. Weapons of the new battalion include 2 X 82mm mortars, 4 X 60mm mortars. The unit also has 4 X IRC-10 radios. Commander for the new battalion will be the present CO of the Than Phong Co, who is an NVA. (C-3).

3. At 1400 hours 4 April 1968, two VC companies unit designation unknown arrived vicinity Pho Minh (YD608291), Xom Ga (YD604283) and Dong Gia (YD607283). Source believes that these two companies moved from the mountains on 3 April 1968, moving at night, and that they may cross Hwy 1 vicinity YD603510 on the night of 5 April 1968 to reinforce units at Quang Dien. (C-3).

4. At 1300 hours 2 April 1968, approximately 50 VC commanded by Tham, moved into the Cao Xa-Hien Luong area (YD637322-YD639310). All carried weapons. Also at this location were 20 armed PsyWar team cadre. The cadre have been divided into two 10 man teams. Leader of the first team is Hoang Dat, Phong Nhieu Village Clerk. Leader of the 2nd team is Thu, Phong Dien District Clerk. Source believes the 50 VC are from the C-3 Company and that their mission is to support the PsyWar teams. The VC and PsyWar teams were known to have been in the Cao Xa-Bien Luong area on 2-3 April 1968. (C-3).

5. At 1430 hours 4 April 1968, 20 armed VC arrived vicinity (YD611320) with four (4) anti-tank mines. Source believes mines will be used to mine Hwy 1 from (YD615310 to YD600309) on the night of 5 April 1968. (C-3).

Meanwhile the 1/501 was busy in its AO, reporting in the April 6th journal its "activities of 5 Apr 68... A Co at 0900 found 4...

		graves - 4 NVA bodies - brown uniforms -		
		4-8 days old - killed by arty or NAP; 1208		
		booby trap - 82mm - YD693299 - destroyed;		
		1530 YD613302 - 1 NVA POW wounded in ankle;		
		B 1006 - grave YD686397 - 5 bloody uniforms -		
		1 NVA body; 1105 YD683311 - received SA fire		
		called arty - swet village - found 6 NVA		
		bodies - 3 AK-47's - destroyed by arty; C		
		0800 - engaged unk size NVA force - YD672293;		
		3 NVA KIA - 1 NVA POW - 1 SKS; 0940 YD672293		
		contact - 1 NVA KIA, 2 SKS - 2 AK-47's - 10		
		CICOM grenades; Co C - no time - YD677297 -		
		1 NVA KIA - 1 CHICOM claymore - 1 RPG -		
		Losses US 11 WIA - all evacuated.		

On April 6th A Company, 2/501st, had the brigade's first serious contact in our new AO. The brigade journal reported that A Company had provided minesweep security from FSB Hardcore to QL 1, then began conducting platoon-size operations. "At 0925 hours, the 1st Platoon was...

moving as planned on operation and conducting search through NW section of village. At 1243 hours vic YD460492 the lead element was engaged by undetermined size enemy force. The plat leader was with the lead element. The plat Sgt was with 2 squad at YD459491. When the lead element became engaged, the squads deployed and established a base of fire. The initial burst of enemy fire wounded the plat leader and killed the RT0. 12 RPG's were in the first volley. Co A (-) began moving to assist plat at 1255 hours. Company moved down north side of stream (YD450506) and crossed vic YD455500 then moved on the south side of stream in an attempt to approach the enemies rear and

flank. Company called for LFT which arrived on station at 1335 hours. Company moved security across river on left flank and began moving forward utilizing the gunships fire power against enemy SA and MW fire received from the flank. Because of the intense enemy fire unit suffered 3 US KIA. 3d Plat crossed bridge at YD457492 and moved to assist 1st Plat. Company was supported by 4 AS, gunships and GS and DS arty. Company returned to FSB HADCORE at 1835 hours. Friendly losses - 3 US KL., 8 US ML., 13 US WL. (8 medevac) and 1 interpreter WL. (medevac). Enemy assessment - 7 NV. KIA. (BC), 12 NV. KIA. (poss), 1 60mm mortar round (destroyed).

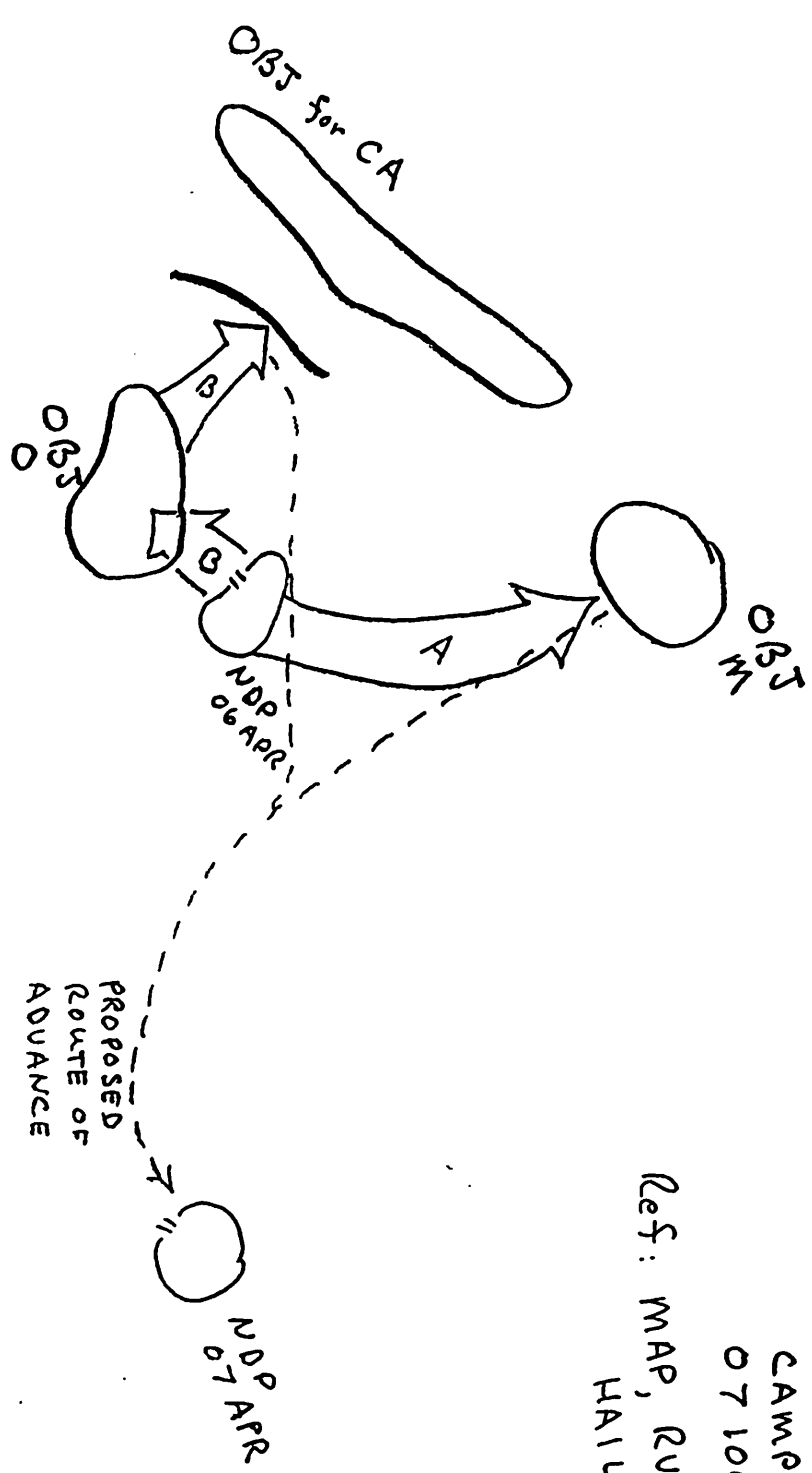
As reported in the brigade journal on the morning of April 7th, the 2/17th planned an operation that day that would begin from the night defensive position of A and B Troops on the 6th...

52	0940	Late Entry	From 2-17: Some of maneuver - B Trp dis- (aero rifle platoon) mounted with ARP OPCON into obj 0, YD510435 -		
			search out 1 km area - A element sending		
			mounted or dismounted obj "M" YD516430 -		
			when complete will go W with block at		
			YD491443. APR CA YD437447 supported by		
			fire from B element maneuver N. to YD502462		
			then back across river to SE - assemble		
			forces to MDF YD555435 - check out area of		
			recent SKYSPOT.		
53	0952		From 2-17: Flight Leader for CA is going		
			out to discuss CA with 3 in field.		
54	0953		From 2-327: 1.1 in sector is cleared at		
			this time.		

CONFIDENTIAL

DRAFT

Copy No. 1  
2/17 Cas, 101st Abn Div  
CAMP EVANS, RVN  
07 1000 Apr 68  
Ref: MAP, RVN, 1:50,000  
HALF AVG sheet



402

ARCP's  
+ LZ for CA: TBA  
for move to NDP 07 Apr: TQA

DECLASSIFIED PER EXECUTIVE ORDER 12356, SECTION 3.3, NND PROJECT NUMBER NND 87354, BY R.M. J.R.B., DATE 7-11-95

57  
40



The 101st Airborne Division report for April 7th summarized the events in the 2d Brigade AO as follows...

b. 2d Bde 101st Abn Div: Co A 2/501, while conducting a sweep of the area of contact on 6 April, vic YD 455495, found 8 US MIA, now confirmed KIA. Also found were 10 NVA KIA (previously carried as 12 poss KIA). At 0845H, vic YD 510440, ARP 2/17 Cav rec sniper fire. Results 1 US WIA (evac). At 1100H, vic YD 477408, Co D 1/502 engaged 2 VC with organic wps. Res: 2 VC KIA. At 1228, vic YD 475415, Co D 1/502 engaged 2 VC with SW fire. Res: 2 VC KIA. At 1510, vic YD 458492, Co A 2/501 found 1 AK-47 (evac). At 1510, vic YD 487423, Co D 1/502 engaged 1 VC with SA. Res: 1 VC KIA. At 1515, vic YD 490418, Co D 1/502 engaged 2 VC with AW. Res: 2 VC KIA. At 1530, vic YD 458492, Co A 2/501 sustained 1 US WIA (evac) as a result of a BBT. At 1705, vic YD 488444, ARP 2/17 Cav sustained 1 US KIA, 2 US WIA (evac) as a result of an engagement with an est VC squad.

On April 8th, the 2/327 had a mortar accident in a training situation. From the brigade journal of that date..

112	1838	late entry	To G3 101 Cpt GILLEM: Msg sent forward at 1630 hours, reference C 2-327 mortar accident Co C was conducting a training operation and had moved by fire and maneuver to crest of a hill against a simulated enemy squad. Co commander revised to simulated Company and		
-----	------	------------	---	--	--

112	cont		ordered withdrawal to vic YD373428 to call		
			supporting indirect fires. Arty FO called		
			in 81mm mortar fire with critical request		
			grid YD367433 and direction 4400 OTL. Mor-		
			tar position YD38004373. 1st round landed		
			approx on area request (WP round). Subse-		
			quent command was left 300 did not change		
			direction. The 2nd round was left 300 how-		
			ever fell slightly into food in the ground.		
			The next FO adjustment was L300, D100 based		
			on primarily on sound sensing. The 3rd rd		
			landed forward of FO into friendly troops		
			wounding 7 (1 litter, 5 ambulatory), criti-		
			cally evac by log bird to B 326 Med subse-		
			quently to 22d Surg PHU LAI - LTC BACKWITH		
			went to the 81mm mortar position and ordered		
			the troops to withdrew 300 meters. He then		
			had the arty FO recall the same fire mission.		
			The 1st, 2nd, 3rd rounds landed in the same		
			location as the previous 1st, 2nd and 3rd		
			rounds had impacted. Col Cushman tentativ-		
			ely believes based upon this that the ad-		
			justment had been either to bold or not		
112	cont		properly sensed. 2-327 policy allows only :		
			Arty FO to adjust arty and mortar fire.		
			LTC Keesling has been appointed investiga-		
			ting officer.		

The brigade journal for April 9th reported the total losses of the 2d Brigade during the ten days of Carentan II to this point. They were: 18 KIA and 70 WIA, of which 58 had been medevaced. The enemy assessment was: 41 NVA KIA, and 32 VC KIA -- plus some 10 or so individual weapons.

For some reason we were not doing much damage, and the enemy was hurting us too much.

On April 10-11, that picture changed. The 2/501 conducted its first, and the 2d Brigade's second, cordon operation.

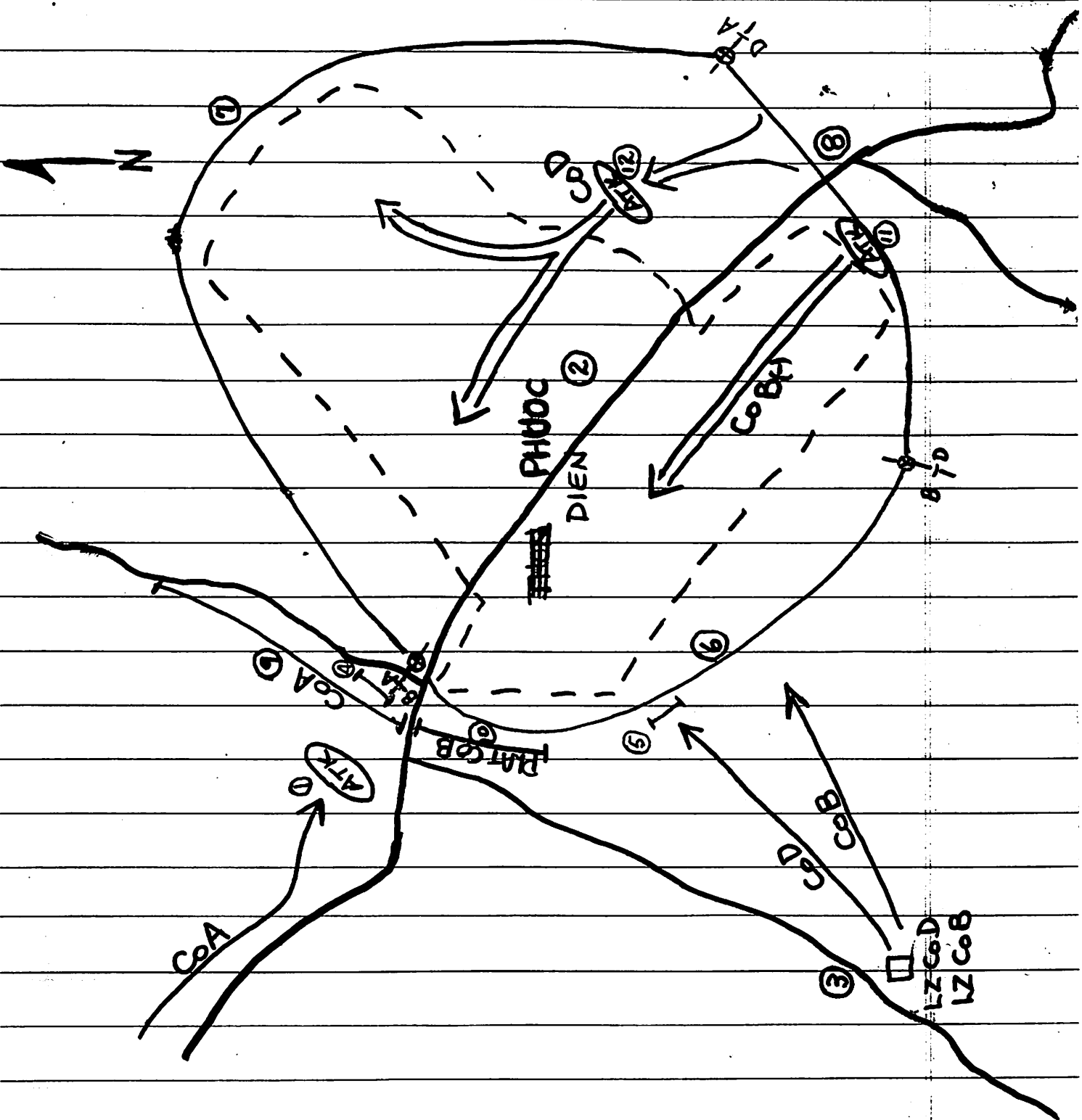
The morning of April 10th, A Company, 2/501st (A/2/501, which was providing security for B/1/321 Artillery at FSB Hardcore [YD 450508], was operating in the immediate area) made heavy contact five kilometers southeast of Hardcore at Phuoc Dien (YD475485), where district intelligence believed that elements of an NVA battalion were located. (See sketch map, next page)

With A Company in an attack position (1), the 2/501 lifted D Company (which had been providing security for Wunder Beach, also the location of the 2/501 command post) to an LZ at (3). After an air and artillery preparation, climaxed at 1305 by the use of CS tear gredades dropped from helicopters, A and D Companies made a coordinated attack at (4) and (5).

From the brigade journal for April 10th...

- \*1258 From 2/501: Bde CO at Bn CP.
- \*1338 Bde CO: A and D 2-501 have both made contact in woodline, both have taken casualties, number unknown at this time, units are maneuvering, employing heavy firepower.
- \*1338 S-3 2-501: A & D receiving heavy fire from objective, AW and RPG. D Co has passed through 1st hedgerow, A Co pressing on slowly, both are working in conjunction with each other.
- \*1410 2-501: Medevac for 3 WIA D Co complete at this time, A Co has 1 KIA, D Co has 1 KIA not evac, ARA back on station.
- \*1554 2-501: Request medevac for D Co 3 WIA, YD475483. Estimated Bn size force.

It was clear that a sizeable NVA force was entrenched in Phuoc Dien, more than A and D companies could handle alone. But night was coming on. From the brigade journal:



- \*1615 CO: A & D pulled away from village, putting in air strike, keep air coming with plenty of napalm and 500 lb bombs.
- \*1630 Bde CO: Informed G3 that air strike and arty fired on 2-501 objective all morning until CA, 2-501 put in CS (tear gas) before the attack, A & D Co attacked employing fire and maneuver with D Co on the right and A Co on the left. D Co ran into a bunker line, received 4 casualties (1 KIA), A Co situation was similar, lead plat of A Co was very well supported by gunships, destroyed bunkers with LAW & 90mm, sustained 1 KIA, recently reported 2d KIA, presently pulling out of village to put in more air strikes and arty, estimated co size force.
- \*1655 CG: CG informed CO not to withdraw A & D 2-501 from area, leave them there and clear up that area if it takes a week."

General Barsanti asked what I needed.<sup>1</sup> I said that I needed helicopters right away to move B Company so that we could encircle the enemy. They were on the way immediately. I replaced B Company, which was securing FSB Hardcore, with A Troop, 2/17, Dick Tallman, battalion commander, moved D Company to an encircling position south of the village (8) where it could link with A Company which had formed a cordon line in the rice paddies to the north and east (7), and at 1840 B Company was making a combat assault into an LZ (3) from which the company could link up with A and D Companies on its flanks (6). The cordon was in place by 2000 hours. We had ordered flareships to be on station all night, with artillery flares on standby.

I told LTC Tallman that two-man-foxholes were to be placed no more than 10 meters apart, and that his troops were to be 100% awake and alert during the night. The cordon line was in open fields with excellent observation of any enemy attempt to exfiltrate. During the night, the NVA made at least 12 attempts to break out; each of them failed, at a cost to the enemy of 36 killed and 2 captured. The next day, after further-artillery preparation, the 2/501st troops swept through the village against moderate resistance, overrunning bunkers and trench systems.

Cleo Hogan, D Company, wrote in his diary...

*10 April*

*We attacked today using gas masks and that is a real joke. Most of us just pulled off the gas masks and cried our way through it. Kept the area encircled all night and the*

<sup>1</sup>This was the kind of leadership that a division commander should give, and was characteristic of General Barsanti. His orders to me, and his offer of help which I converted into helicopters for an encirclement, led to a turning point in the fortunes of the 2d Brigade. In the remaining months of my command, the brigade received considerable credit for the series of cordon operations that followed this one. But the basic pattern was set here, and in my remarks at General Barsanti's farewell dinner for me in late June 1968, I said that a great deal of the credit for our accomplishments belonged to the division commander, for his direction and assistance to me on April 10th.

*Air Force dropped flares to keep the area lit up. At 0330 the NVA attempted to break out and several of the 3d Platoon were wounded... We brought out a loudspeaker and our interpreter told them to surrender or be killed. About 20 of them surrendered and we only had to kill about 6 more.*

In an account, written "during the fall [of 1968] when I was at 2d Bde Hq [as assistant S-3]," Hogan writes a version slightly different from that of the brigade journal, indicating that the action began in a more ad hoc fashion...

On 10 April 1968 2-501 CP was located at Naval supply Depot Utah Beach. (The chronology calls it Wunder Beach, however we knew it as Utah Beach) Company D was providing security for the Depot and Bn Hq, and conducting close in daylight recon patrols. Company A was providing security for FB Hardcore and conducting close in daylight patrols. During the morning of 10 April 68 Company D was located approximately 1 kilometer north of Utah Beach relaxing and swimming in the ocean after having provided security the night before. One platoon of Company A led by Lt Grugel departed FB Hardcore to conduct a recon mission in the area of Phuoc Dien. The platoon approached the village and was engulfed in a hail of fire by a large NVA force in the village. The platoon sustained massive WIA's and a few KIA's. At approximately 1145hrs Company D was alerted to be ready for pickup by UH1D to conduct a Combat Assault on Thon Phuoc Dien to assist Company A. At the same time the remaining platoons of Company A would CA from FB Hardcore into the same area. Company A was inserted on the left and Company D on the right. Our mission would be to pin down the enemy while Company A evacuated their WIA and KIA. Company A was inserted without resistance, however one platoon of Company D (2d Plt) was inserted too close to the wood line and came under heavy fire as they exited the aircraft. The initial battle resulted in one KIA. (Sgt G.P. Eller). It was obvious that the enemy force was much larger than Bn had estimated and Company D was ordered to pull back 500 meters and direct the TAC air strikes. At approximately 1530hrs Company D attacked the village while Company A maintained a blocking position on the north and east. The village had been prepped with artillery and APA and was then bombarded with 4.2 inch mortar tear gas canisters. (To my knowledge this was one of the only battles in which tear gas and gas masks were used in Viet Nam and the official record doesn't even mention it). Even after massive artillery and air strikes the enemy force continued to hold their positions. The attack had only gotten underway when both Company A and Company D were ordered to immediately break contact and force march immediately to FB Hardcore. Company D had captured an NVA POW who stated that a large NVA force were going to attack FB Hardcore on the night of 10 April. Company A and Company D had moved approximately half way to FB Hardcore when both were ordered to turn around and go back to the village Phuoc Dien. Company B was CA'd to join Co A and Co D in establishing a cordon around the village. (note: 2/17 Cav moved to secure FB Hardcore, no attack came).

During the night the NVA made several attempts to break out of the cordon in small groups and at approximately 0115hrs a platoon size NVA force attempted to storm the Company D area. Lt Bishoff and a few other members of 3D were wounded, however the NVA were beaten back. During the morning hours of 11 April the cordon continued with additional air strikes and artillery being used. 3d Plt Company D observed several NVA firing from bunkers and attempted to silence them using M82LAW, to no avail. Bn Headquarters were pushing Company D to begin an assault on the village, however it was obvious that the bunkers would have to be neutralized before any attack could begin. Cpt Hogan requested that a 106RR rifle be airlifted to the area. The 106RR arrived at approximately 1130hrs and fired 5 rounds. Brigade Headquarters sent out a loud speaker unit and an interpreter, and after firing the 5 106RR rounds, the loud speaker unit demanded that the NVA surrender or face additional 106RR, artillery, and air strikes. After a proximately 5 minutes an NVA soldier came out of the wood line with a white flag tied to his rifle barrel, and asked to talk to the officer in charge. Cpt Hogan moved to the area of 3d Plt and the NVA stated that there were only about 25 NVA still alive in the village and that they would surrender if the US forces would quit firing. Approximately 20 minutes later approximately 20 NVA marched single file out of the village to a point approximately 200 yds from Co D

perimeter. The NVA stopped, formed a platoon formation, stacked arms just like a parade and then marched to the 3D area with their hands on their heads. The NVA were airlifted to Utah Beach classified as POW's.

At 1330hrs Company B on the left and Company D on the right began a sweep of the village. Company B met no resistance and swept through their sector, however Company D came under heavy fire approximately half way through the village. 1st Plt was sent to help 2d Plt neutralize a complex of bunkers and while the fire fight was raging, BG Clay the assistant Division Commander radioed that he was overhead and wanted to land and observe the mop-up operations. Cpt Hogan requested that B. Clay delay coming in the area until the fighting had died down however within 5 minutes BG Clay was on the front lines. 5 additional NVA were killed, 2 more captured and then Company B swept through the village without additional incidents. Spt Eller's body was recovered and evacuated. Company D and Company A moved to FB Hardcore and at 1730hrs Company D was moved by truck to Utah Beach. During the 2 day battle Company D lost 1 KIA (Spt Eller) and approximately 15 MIA. Company D had captured 22 NVA and killed at least 67 in our sector.

Casualties to the 2/501st were 7 killed and 35 wounded. Enemy losses were 70 NVA killed and 13 captured. 24 individual weapons and 7 crew-served weapons were taken. It was evident from the PWs and captured documents that the 2/501 had trapped and destroyed a company-size element of the 6th Battalion, 812th NVA Regiment.

The after action report highlighted "the need for continuous illumination in cordon operations... During the hours of darkness the trapped NVA made numerous attempts to exfiltrate the cordon area. Illumination enabled movement to be detected, and small unit commanders were able to make rapid adjustments in disposition to thwart each attempt."

Another lesson for me was that it was nice to have the 106mm recoilless rifles that we got from the 2/17 Cav to bust bunkers at short range.

In retrospect, I wonder why -- given our success with the 1/501 cordon in late March -- we did not go directly into developing cordon situations as soon as we arrived in this AO to the north. It wasn't until Phuoc Dien that I got the picture of how we should operate. One thing for sure, we went into that operating mode when we returned to LZ Sally.

Which we soon did. On April 12th, the 2/12th Cav Squadron of the 1st ACD returned from Operation Pegasus to Camp Evans. The next day it relieved 1/502 of its base security mission and the 1/502 headed for LZ Sally. (We would quickly lose the 1/502, which would go south of Hue to FSB Henry, under the 1st Brigade/101st).

On the 14th the 2/327 was relieved on LZ Jane by the 1/5 Cav and moved by CH-47 and truck convoy to rejoin the 1st Brigade, 101st, south of Hue.

On the 14th the 2d Brigade CP, having been relieved by the 2d Brigade/1st Cav, departed Camp Evans. At 1500 that day it opened at LZ Sally and resumed opcon of the 1/501st and responsibility for its former AO, including the 1/505 Abn of the 3d/82d.

On April 17th the 2/501 turned over the responsibility for Wunder Beach to the 3d Battalion, 26th Marine Regiment, 3d Marine Division. The 2/501st moved its artillery battery and B Company to Quang Dien, its command post to LZ Sally, closing at 1525 hours, and would complete the battalion's move south the next day.

On the 17th and 18th the 2/17 Cav, which would keep its base at Camp Evans, motor marched south into the 2d Brigade AO, taking up security missions at several bridge sites along QL 1.

Pleased to be back at LZ Sally and in our old area of operations, we got to work.