

Then came Tet? The first major action of the Tet offensive for the 25th div. troops with calvary sent its columns streaming down highway 1 towards the heavily besieged Tonsnood airbase. In brutal fighting the calvary men aided by air strikes and artillery pried the enemy away from the vital base more than 3,000 enemy bodies were counted. Meanwhile the 2nd brigade was drawn into the caldron of fire near Hakman as the enemy approached Saigon. There the 2nd of the

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12th infantry warriors killed 22 vietcong on a sharp fight. The same day the 3rd of the 22nd killed 30 enemies near Apcho. The third regulars also figured in a ten day battle to prevent Charlie cutting Highway 1. The regulars won, Charlie lost among other things 219 of his best fighters. Contact continued almost daily with well armed and disciplined Vietcong and NV soldiers, but when the operation ended tropic lightning soldiers had claimed more than 3,000 enemy soldiers. In the course of operation Saratoga tropic lightning also captured a quarter of a million rounds of small arms ammunition, identified huge enemy tunnel complexes and generally destroyed much of the enemies combat effectiveness. A new enemy the NVA had appeared on the scene with the courage and professional skills of the tropic lightning soldiers had again won the day. From early dec. to late feb. tropic lightning troopers faced some of the sternest tests at the hand of the Vietcong and paid them back four-fold in operation yellowstone.

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The night of 31 January saw the initiation of the VC TET offensive throughout the III CTZ. Within the 2nd Brigade TACI, the offensive was initiated with stand off rocket and mortar attacks against Cu Chi, Duc Hoa, Bao Trai and Trang Bang. This attack signalled the first utilization of 122MM rockets against Cu Chi. The main emphasis was directed against Ton Son Nhut and Saigon although there were several corollary ground attacks in the TACI. The following day, the intent of the enemy in the Cu Chi area became apparent as National Route 1 was interdicted at Tan Thu Trung by a VC Battalion of the 272nd Regiment, the battle to push the 272nd out of the Tan Thu Trung - An Cho area lasted 10 days (6-16 February) and cost the VC 219 dead. The apparent intent of the enemy to remain in the area, no matter what the consequences, pointed out the importance of this interdiction to the overall success of the VC master plan in and around Saigon. The enemy consisted of the 271st and 272nd Regiments as well as the 2nd Go Mon and 1st ML-4 Battalions and assorted artillery elements of the 56th and 58th Battalions of the 69th artillery Groups and portions of the 8th Artillery. (Contact was made daily in most portions of the area with well armed, and disciplined VC soldiers.)

The extent of the enemy build-up became obvious as large caches of food, ammunition and equipment to include rockets, were discovered. Contact with 2nd Brigade in the Saigon area cost the VC 67 KIA (100), 126 KIA (100), and 211 weapons captured.

CONCLUSIONS: The losses sustained by enemy forces, both local force and main force, during Operation SARATOGA has greatly reduced their combat effectiveness. The large quantities of arms, ammunition and other supplies captured by 2nd Brigade units, have rendered sustained enemy offensive operations in the area extremely difficult without a major resupply effort. In addition, much knowledge of VC main force and NVA organization, equipment and operation tendencies has been gained by 2nd Brigade units. This information can be effectively utilized in future operations against similar units. Large tunnel complexes and caches areas in the Ho Bo, Filhol, and Trung An have been rendered unusable. Rome Plow operations in the Ho Bo and Iron Triangle have destroyed valuable, previously secure base areas.

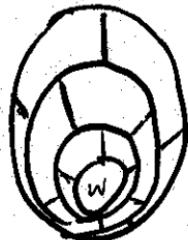
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## Tet

In January-February 1968, during a truce which had been agreed upon in honor of the Vietnamese New Year, a desperate enemy launched his all out offensive in a dramatic attempt to regain the ground and influence that the operations of the Tropic Lightning Division and other allied forces had denied him. Moving rapidly into the path of the main force units which the enemy had assembled for his major attack, Tropic Lightning soldiers absorbed the full force of the enemy blows and then counterattacked viciously to smash the offensive and destroy many of the enemy's crack units.

In the second phase offensive, the Division maneuvered the full might of its forces into blocking positions immediately west of Saigon to meet the threat against the capital city. In a pitched battle that raged for ten days, the effectiveness of three enemy divisions was totally destroyed and the enemy was forced to withdraw far short of his objective.

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