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HEADQUARTERS

3d Squadron, 17th Cavalry
APO 96216

AVGC-BC

15 April 1968

SUBJECT: Combat Operations After Action Report

See Distribution

1. NAME OF OPERATION: Operation WILDERNESS
2. DATES OF OPERATION: 8 March 1968 thru 7 April 1968
3. LOCATION: Tay Ninh Province
4. COMMAND HEADQUARTERS: 3d Squadron, 17th Cavalry
5. REPORTING OFFICER: WILLIAM W. BRANNON Jr., LTC, Commanding
6. TASK ORGANIZATION:

A Troop, Major Robert A. Witcher, Commanding
(OPCON to 199th Light Infantry Brigade)

B Troop, Major James T. McManus, Commanding
8 March 1968 thru 23 March 1968; 24 March 1968 OPCON to 1st Brigade,
1st Infantry Division

C Troop, Major Gary E. Luck, Commanding
OPCON to 9th Infantry Division until 23 March 1968; 24 March 1968
thru 7 April 1968.

D Troop, Captain Russell W. Mengel, Commanding

7. SUPPORTING FORCES: None

8. INTELLIGENCE:

A. When the 3d Squadron 17th Cavalry was committed to Operation Wilderness
there had been no recent contact with the 271st, 272d and 273d VC Regiments
which indicated that elements of these units had possibly moved to supply
areas and were deliberately avoiding contact with Free World Forces.

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B. Terrain and Weather:

(1) General: The TAOR was bounded generally by Cambodia on the North and West in War Zone C, the 1st Infantry Division boundary on the East and the XT25 East West grid line on the South.

(2) Terrain:

(a) Observation and fields of fire ranged from limited in War Zone C to excellent in the rice paddies near Go Dau Ha.

(b) Obstacles - Throughout the TAOR there were no natural or artificial obstacles which impeded the reconnaissance or movement of the squadron.

(c) Concealment - The hours of darkness and early morning fog provided the VC and NVA with natural concealment from air activity.

(d) Key Terrain - Highway 22 was selected as key terrain since this is the route by which convoys move to resupply the Tay Ninh area.

(e) Avenues of approach:

(1) Fish Hook - Saigon River - Michelin Plantation.

(2) Highway #1 leading from Cambodia to Go Dau Ha.

(3) Weather:

(a) Visibility - During early morning hours visibility was restricted due to fog and haze.

(b) Temperature - The temperature averaged in the high eighties throughout the operation.

C. Intelligence During the Operation (Annex B Intelligence Overlay):

(1) Lines of communication for the VC/NVA extended from the Fish Hook South toward the Michelin Plantation.

(2) Logistical Bases: Several large bunker complexes were discovered. In the vicinity of XT5271 a possible transfer point was located; several truck tracks (3/4 ton) led into the area from the North but no tracks were discovered leading from the area to the South. There were also two 3/4 ton trucks, type and make unknown, spotted under camouflage. In the area a cache consisting of approximately 4000 lbs of rice was discovered as well as 300 boxes of small arms ammunition.

9. MISSION:

Conduct armed aerial reconnaissance of 1st Brigade, 25th Infantry Division, TAOR to locate VC/NVA forces, enemy logistical bases, and interdict enemy lines of communications. Provide counter-mortar aero weapons team for Dau Tieng Base Camp during the hours of darkness. Conduct route reconnaissance and security between Tay Ninh and Trang Bang.

10. CONCEPT OF OPERATION:

3d Squadron, 17th Cavalry (-) will conduct armed aerial reconnaissance in the 1st Brigade TAOR with one air cavalry troop. B Troop will locate, report,

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and destroy, within its capabilities, VC/NVA forces, enemy logistical bases, and enemy lines of communications. Provide a counter-mortar team for Dau Tieng each evening. D Troop will conduct a daily route reconnaissance of Highway 1 and 22 from Tay Ninh to XT413238. Local patrols will be conducted along route following the initial reconnaissance mission. Secure engineer work parties as necessary.

II. EXECUTION: 8 March 1968 thru 23 March 1968

On 8 March 1968, 3d Squadron, 17th Cavalry (-) was placed ORCON to 1st Brigade, 25th Infantry Division and given the mission of performing reconnaissance in the 1st Brigade TAOR (Annex A), searching for signs of enemy movement and all enemy intelligence. During this period, lines of communication between Cambodia and the Michelin Plantation and several base areas were plotted. On 11 March, B Troop spotted four NVA soldiers dressed in khaki uniforms at XT613312. The enemy troops were taken under fire resulting in 4 KBA (EC). Later in the day, D Troop reported a roadblock and possible enemy ambush site at XT530183. One company of 4th Battalion, 23d Infantry was sent to that location as a reaction force. Due to the distance and time involved for the reaction force, the enemy had abandoned the ambush site just prior to the company deploying. No contact was made during the maneuver. On 16 March, two aero weapons teams from B Troop were sent to XT234300 when an ARVN outpost came under heavy attack by an estimated VC battalion. B Troop received anti-aircraft fire from one position which they immediately engaged and silenced. The aero weapons teams then engaged the VC positions. With the combined fires from the weapons aircraft and the ARVN soldiers, the VC attack subsided and was soon broken. B Troop was credited with 25 KBA (EC). On 18 March, an aero scout team from B Troop was on a reconnaissance vicinity XT565503 when the team received heavy automatic weapons fire. The team leader immediately called artillery on the position. Following the fire mission the team made a low level assessment of the damage and credited the artillery with one automatic weapons position destroyed and two KBA (EC). Between 18 March to 5 April, D Troop was assigned the additional mission of escorting gravel trucks, from the 65th Engineer Battalion, from Tay Ninh to Trang Bang in support of road repair operations. On 20 March, B Troop discovered an enemy storage area at XT481593 containing bunkers and one large tin building. An artillery mission was called on the site, resulting in one secondary explosion producing a 150 foot high mushroom cloud. On 21 March, the aero rifle platoon of B Troop was inserted at XT1646, on a reconnaissance in force operation of a reported VC rendezvous point. Inspection of this area failed to show any signs of recent activity and the platoon was extracted. D Troop, on a route reconnaissance mission, encountered an ARVN popular forces unit which had just been ambushed along the route at XT385285. D Troop assisted the unit by placing 106mm recoilless rifle fire on targets pointed out by an American advisor to the unit. Contact was then broken with unknown results. The aero rifle platoon of B Troop was inserted on 22 March at XT573502, in coordination with 2d Battalion, 22d Infantry (Mechanized). The platoon established a blocking position at that location as the battalion swept toward the platoon from the west. Negative enemy contact was encountered on the operation and the

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platoon was extracted at 1330 hours. On 23 March, C Troop was released from the 9th Infantry Division and returned to squadron control.

b. 24 March 1968 thru 7 April 1968

On 24 March 1968 B Troop was placed OPCON to 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division and G Troop assumed B Troop's missions in operation WILDERNESS. On 25 March D Troop encountered an ARVN Mechanized Company which had been ambushed at XT299361. D Troop approached the rear of the ARVN unit and deployed to the south, west and east of the village of Can An (XT292361). D Troop supported the ARVN advance by placing 106mm recoilless rifle fire on the enemy locations. Twenty (20) VC were spotted at XT299361, attempting to envelop the ARVN from the south and were immediately engaged. The VC then withdrew in the direction they had come. Approximately one hour and thirty minutes later, the VC broke contact with the ARVN unit. D Troop had no negative casualties or damage and inflicted three (3) VC KIA (Possible). The aero rifle platoon of C Troop was inserted at XT528553 in a coordinated operation with 2d Battalion, 22d Infantry (Mechanized). C Troop set up a blocking position with the battalion sweeping toward the platoon. Negative contact was established and the platoon was extracted at 1300 hours vicinity XT519556. On 26 March, an Air Force Forward Air Controller, assigned to the squadron, spotted 40 VC at XT120947, walking along a road. The FAC contacted one of G Troop's aero scout teams and vectored them to the target area. By using forward air controlling procedures, the team was vectored to the enemy location, made the first firing pass, and caught the VC still on the road. The team was credited with ten (10) VC KIA (EC). On 30 March, C Troop was performing an aerial reconnaissance south of Tay Ninh between the Oriental River and the Cambodian border. An estimated VC company was sighted occupying a base camp at XT301301. Three airstrikos were put into the target area, however the strikos were relatively ineffective. On 3 April, C Troop spotted an enemy base camp at XT539721 and marked the target for a FAC. Results of the airstrike were 30-40 bunkers destroyed with two KIA (EC). On 5 April, C Trp discovered recent vehicle tracks leading from Cambodia toward Dau Tieng. Similar tracts had been spotted and reported in the past, however, no trucks were ever found. On this occasion, C Troop followed the vehicle tracks to a storage area, XT527713, and found two 3/4 ton trucks, type unknown, and 300 boxes of ammunition. An air strike on the area destroyed 1 truck and more than half the ammunition and damaged the other truck. Artillery fire was placed on the target area throughout that night. On 7 April, D Troop stopped a Vietnamese vehicle along with several suspicious personnel, at XT352334. The vehicle was filled with contraband including whiskey, cigarettes, C-Rations, and beer. The vehicle and personnel were turned over to the Vietnamese National Police. This period confirmed that VC/NVA forces were rebuilding and reoccupying old base areas in War Zone C and were moving large amounts of supplies from Cambodia, by truck, toward the Dau Tieng area.

12. RESULTS:

a. Friendly

	KIA	WHA
Officers	0	0
Warrant Officers	0	0
Enlisted Men	0	0

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b. Enemy:

- (1) VC/NVA KIA (BG) - 82
- (2) VC/NVA KIA (Poss) - 109
- (3) Military Structures Destroyed - 107
- (4) Military Structures Damaged - 23
- (5) Sampans Destroyed - 37
- (6) Sampans Damaged - 4
- (7) Miscellaneous Destroyed:
1-3/4 Ton Truck
150-Boxes of Small Arms Ammunition

c. All Bomb Damage Assessments were conducted by aerial reconnaissance.

13. ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIVITY

a. Supply

- (1) No difficulties were experienced in either Class I, II, III, IV, V.
- (2) Total ammunition expenditures by the squadron during this operations:

2.75 Rockets	1,376
7.62mm Linked	154,530
5.56mm	4,022
40mm (M-79)	393
40mm (M-5)	1,684
Smoke (All Colors)	193
Frag Grenades	10
White Phosphorous Grenades	240
106mm (Recoilless Rifle)	29
81mm (Mortar)	4
MK-24 (Flare)	192

b. Maintenance:

Daily road reconnaissance missions are very demanding on equipment and vehicles in D Troop. Each vehicle averaged 125 miles per day during this operation. Although numerous parts were replaced, particularly suspension items and tires, equipment readiness averaged 99% throughout the period. A concrete preventive maintenance program, actively supervised before, during, and after operations, forestalled major problems. Aircraft maintenance was greatly improved enabling all air cavalry troops to increase their availability approximately 10% over that available during the last operation.

14. COMMANDER's ANALYSIS

a. ITEM: Local Intelligence

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ORGANIZATION OR INSTALLATION		LOCATION		PERIOD COVERED			
				FROM		TO	
S3/S2		Cu Chi		HOUR	DATE	HOUR	DATE
Hq, 1st Bn 8th Arty		XT 654 154		0001	8 Mar 68	2400	8 Mar 68
APO 96225							

ITEM NO.	TIME IN	INCIDENTS, MESSAGES, ORDERS, ETC	ACTION TAKEN
1.	0001	Journal opened.	MJR
2.	0600	Div Arty--Helicopter for Bn CO will be ready from 1300 to 1600 hours today.	Not Bn HQ TA
3.	1300	Bn CO departed Cu Chi at this time.	Not FDC TA
4.	1350	6/77 Arty--Night location for 2/27 Inf is at grid XT578164.	Not Fwd FDC TA
5.	1737	2nd Bde LNO--2/34 Armor has a roving patrol with 4/9 Inf C Co. attached. They will be moving from grid XT726156 to grid XT733156.	Ntfy Fwd FDC MJR
6.	1800	2nd Bde LNO--2/27 Inf night location attacked by unknown size VC force with small arms, auto weapons, and RPG's. Returned fire with small arms, auto weapons, mortars, and light fire teams. Results: neg US casualties, 1 VC KIA (BC). Contact was broken at 1815 hours.	Not Fwd FDC VC
7.	1820	Fwd FDC--A/1/8 and B/3/13 received end-of-mission at 1647 hours. Results: 5 VC KIA (BC) by arty, 3 secondary explosions, 11 buildings destroyed.	Ntfy D/A TA
8.	1900	2nd Bde LNO--1/27 Inf night location is in grid XT528269.	Ntfy Fwd FDC TA
9.	2315	6/77 Arty--2/27 LNO requests a "Killer Junior" at his location tomorrow or the next day. If there is any question contact Bn Co.	Not FDC JP
10.	2400	Journal closed.	MJR

INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

During the reporting period enemy activity was moderate. A/1/8 fired one mission resulting in 5 VC KIA (BC), 3 secondary explosions, and 11 buildings destroyed.

TYPED NAME AND GRADE OF OFFICER OR OFFICIAL ON DUTY SIGNATURE

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ORGANIZATION OR INSTALLATION		LOCATION	PERIOD COVERED			
S3/ S2 Hq, 1st Bn 8th Arty APO 96225		Cu Chi XT 654 154	FROM HOUR		TO DATE	
			0001	8 Mar 68	2400	8 Mar 68

ITEM NO.	TIME IN	INCIDENTS, MESSAGES, ORI E.S, ETC	ACTION TAKEN
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY CONT.			

Totals are as follows:

PERSONNEL:

VC KIA (BC): 729 VC KIA (POSS): 1630

1. Weapons	DES	DAM
a. Mortars	17	2
b. MG's	11	2
2. Buildings	289	116
3. Ammo dumps	1	0
4. Bridges	10	0
5. Trenches	3	0
6. Sampans	105	7
7. Vehicles	3	3
8. Boats	14	0
9. Sec Exp	99	0
10. Bunkers	81	5

PLANS AND SUMMARY

MOVES: None.

PLANNED MOVES FOR 9 March: Hq, B/1/8 to move from FSPB Harrison to FSPB MacArthur.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT INFORMATION

The total amount of ammunition expended since arrival in country is 479,201 rounds.

All tubes are operational.

TYPED NAME AND GRADE OF OFFICER OR OFFICIAL ON DUTY SIGNATURE

LEE O. RINGHAM, CPT, ARTY, Asst S-3.

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13. STATISTICAL RESULTS:

a. Enemy Losses:

VC KIA (BC)	2043
VC KIA (POSS)	477
VC PW	39
SMALL ARMS	247
CREW SERVED WEAPONS	224
122MM ROCKET	13
122MM RL	3
RPG ROUNDS	362
BANGELOR TORPEDOS	26
SMALL ARMS AMMO	332095
60MM MORTAR AMMO	462
81 AND 82MM AMMO	365
105 ROUNDS	105
BOMBS	11
EXPLOSIVES	235 lbs
HAND GRENADES	61
AT MINES	51
AP MINES	36
BOOBY TRAPS	33
CBU'S	207
BUNKERS	2412
SPIDER HOLES	219
TRENCHES	19
TUNNELS	216
SAMPANS	15
PUNJI PITS	99

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RICE	107250 lbs
DOCUMENTS	245
MEDICAL SUPPLIES	146
GAS MASK	10001

B. Friendly Losses

UNIT	KIA	WIA	DOW	TOTAL
1-27	65	439	5	509
2-27	33	265	1	299
1-5	24	248	5	277
4-43	30	258	1	289
2-32	12	121	0	133
3-22	42	134	2	178
2-34	0	7	0	7
4-9	64	124	0	188
65TH ENGR	0	2	0	2
168TH LCTF	0	3	0	3
1-8 ARTY	0	18	0	18
D TROOP 3-4 CAV	4	18	0	22

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2500 Doss

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