

OPERATION YELLOWSTONE

29 DEC. 1967 - 25 JAN. 1968

Operation Yellowstone II was launched when orders were issued to the 3rd Battalion, 22nd Infantry to conduct offensive operations to destroy VC/NVA forces and their installations. Direct contact with enemy forces was encouraged and a large body count was hoped for.

The battalion was to combat assault into an area to later establish Fire Support Base Burt. After the area was sufficiently cleared and secured the 2nd Battalion 77th Artillery was to be air lifted into the FSB. After the FSB was well established, the 2nd Battalion, 22nd Infantry (Mechanized) was to link up with its sister battalion, the Regulars.

The execution of the mission was to take place around the FSB. The 2/22 would establish night ambushes while the 3/22 would secure the FSB as well as set up night ambush positions near the defensive perimeter.

Working deep inside of War Zone C, the 3/22 expected plenty of enemy contact since the dense jungle containing many streams and rivers, allotted the enemy a good staging area.

Intelligence reports indicated that the 165th NVA regiment had been operating in Binh Long Province along with the 2nd Battalion of the 141st NVA regiment which was located specifically around Katum and Bo Tuc. The enemy was known to be suffering from various diseases which they had incurred while infiltrating from the north. It was anticipated that the enemy would utilize several battalions to secure the passage routes for the others to safely return to Cambodia.

The highlight of the operation came when the NVA forces made a futile attack on the night laarger position known as Fire Support Base Burt. The furious battle at Sui Cut turned out to be one of the largest enemy losses in a single attack during the Vietnam conflict.

THE BATTLE OF SUI CUT

The battle of Sui Cut was a massive ground and mortar assault on FSB Burt occupied by the 3rd Battalion 22nd Infantry. The base was struck initially with a heavy mortar attack consisting of 61mm mortars. It was not anticipated that the base would be attacked by ground forces because it had ben receiving incoming mortar rounds since the day it was built.

The main front of the attack was focused on the northern portion of the perimeter at approximately 0001 hours. This section of the perimeter was held by the 2nd Battalion, 22nd Infantry (Mechanized). The attacking force moved toward the western edge as another VC force launched a barrage of rifle propelled grenades, small arms, and automatic weapons at the southern edge of the perimeter utilizing ditches on both sides of the road for cover.

Soon, the eastern edge of the perimeter was also under intense fire and the entire side of the defensive perimeter was under threat of enemy seizure. Organic artillery within the base immediately started firing direct support with beehive rounds to route the enemy from the bunker line.

Fierce fighting continued until the enemy began to withdraw at first light. During the night the insurgents penetrated the perimeter along the western edge resulting in hand to hand combat and necessitating reinforcements with greater fire power. APCs from the 2/22 were utilized to regain the original bunker line.

Because of the speed and ferocity of the Viet Cong attacks, the ambush patrol and all of the listening posts from Co. C, 3/22 had to remain outside of the base. The ambush patrol had spotted the enemy as they moved in on the FSB. They did not ambush the force because it was too large to fit in the kill zone. One shot would have given away their location which would mean certain death.

Not long after the FSB was attacked, the enemy spotted the ambush patrol and launched an assault at it. Fifty percent casualties were reported immediately. Out of the sixteen man force, one was killed in action, eleven were wounded and one was killed by a friendly air strike.

Helicopter gunships and airstrikes were used to thwart the attackers. The assault was so massive and intense that it became necessary to use the air strikes and helicopter gunships within a few feet of the defensive positions. Much of the action occurred between the listening posts and the bunker line.

Estimated enemy casualties the next morning were set at 105 VC KIA, 2 VC prisoners of war, and an undetermined number of individual and crew served weapons. U.S. losses were 16 KIA and 99 WIA.