

5 March 1968

AVDF-BO

SUBJECT: Combat Operations After Action Report (U)
Attack on Ly Tin District Headquarters, 12 January 1968

198th Light Infantry Brigade
Americal Division
APO San Francisco 96219

Ly Tin
K-5

TO: See Distribution

1. (U) Name of Operation: Ly Tin Support
2. (U) Date of Operation: 020200 January 1968
3. (U) Location: Chu Lai, RVN; map reference 1:50,000 sheet, Nrs. 6739 (I) and 6739 (IV).
4. (C) Command and Control Headquarters: HQ's, 198th Light Infantry Brigade (LIB).
5. (U) Reporting Officers:
 - a. Colonel James A. Waldie, CO, 198th LIB
 - b. LTC Jack T. Henson, CO, 1st Bn, 46th Inf
 - c. LTC William H. Embley, CO, 1st Bn, 14th Arty
 - d. CPT Walter E. Reaser, CO, H Troop, 17th Cav
6. (C) Task Organization:
 - HQ's, 198th LIB
 - 1st Bn, 46th Inf
 - 1st Bn, 14th Arty
 - H Troop, 17th Cav
 - B Battery, 3rd Bn, 16th Arty (GS)
7. (C) Supporting Forces:
 - a. 176th Aviation Company (Airmobile Light) - provided gunships employing suppressive fires to destroy the enemy and relieve enemy pressure on the Ly Tin compound and Combined Action Platoon Location.
 - b. 1st Bn 14th Artillery (105mm) (DS) provided illumination, counter mortar, and direct support fire to disrupt and destroy the enemy, and to block routes of withdrawal.

2-05

File
ASH

3rd Bn, 16 Artillery (155/C") (GS) on c. 11.

GROUP-4
Downgraded at 3 year intervals;
Declassified after 12 years.

On 2 January 1968, the Viet Cong launched an attack on the The Military District Headquarters, coordinated BT 479076 and subsequently attacked the Fifth Combined Action Platoon, K Company, USMC, located at coordinates BT 409126. The enemy was unsuccessful in both attacks. Both Ly Tin and CAP K5 were defended by Popular Forces and American advisory teams. The Ly Tin compound had additional support from two armored personnel carriers with crews from Troop H, 17th Cav, 198th LTB. The APC's were positioned within the Ly Tin compound prior to the attack. The 198th LTB provided direct support artillery and mortar fires, gun ships and flareships to reinforce CAP K 5, and the Ly Tin District Headquarters.

9. Intelligence

a. Weather:

(1) The weather conditions during the period 1 to 2 January were generally cloudy skies with light overcast, no rain, high humidity, and even temperatures averaging 65 degrees as a minimum. The illumination rate was 0 per cent on the morning of 2 January.

(2) Effects on enemy operations: Periods of reduced visibility favored undetected movement by enemy units.

(3) Effects upon Friendly Operations: Periods of reduced visibility restricted the night time employment of gunships and effective use of artillery illumination.

b. Terrain: The terrain in the area of operations varied generally from low hills to large areas of flat rice paddy marsh land. The Ly Tin District Headquarters is flanked on the north and east by rice fields, on the south by a sand plain and on the west by a hamlet. Population centers are widely scattered throughout the area and coincide generally with the location of rice paddy land, and along Highway One. The area is coastal, bounded on the east by the An Tan River and on the north by the Ben Van River. Both Ly Tin and CAP K5 are located within the 1st Bn, 45th Inf, 198th LTB area of operations.

c. Enemy:

(1) During the month of December 1967, Numerous intelligence reports provided by field agents, indicated that the Viet Cong would increase their activities within the Chu Lai area. These reports indicated that the Viet Cong would attack Binh Son, Ly Tin and Tan Ky either in December 1967 or January 1968.

(2) The enemy's attack on Ly Tin shows evidence of detailed planning and partially effective execution. An analysis of their attack indicates that the enemy's missions were to:

(a) Attack and destroy the Ly Tin District Headquarters.

(b) Ambush any U.S. Forces that were deployed to assist the Ly Tin compound.

(c) Mortar the Fifth Combined Action Platoon and exploit the situation with a ground attack if it appeared to be feasible.

(d) Mortar the 3-16th Artillery to destroy the artillery or prevent the battery from firing in support of Ly Tin CAP K5.

(3) The enemy knew the disposition and range capability of the Brigade's organic and reinforcing artillery units, and planned their attack for Ly Tin accordingly. The disposition of the batteries of the 198th LTB was such that it appeared that 1-14th Artillery could not fire in support of the district headquarters. The enemy also realized that the 3-16 Artillery's location was such that it could fire in support of Ly Tin. Consequently, the enemy launched a mortar attack on the headquarters element of the 3-16 Artillery while attacking Ly Tin and CAP K 5. However, the firing battery was not co-located with the headquarters; therefore the mortar attack did not destroy the howitzers.

(4) Prior to the attack, no noticeable increase of enemy units was reported observed within the northern portion of the 198th LIB TAOR. There are strong indications that the enemy used the Ben Van and An Tan rivers as approaches to the area. Elements of one VC company, located west of Highway One, moved by land to participate in the attack. Two VC companies entered the Ly Tin area by waterways. Three companies were employed in the attack: elements of two companies mortared and attacked the Ly Tin compound and the other company was employed in two blocking or ambush positions. The enemy established a blocking/ambush position north of the An Tan bridge, and another between hill 69 and the Ly Tin compound. The enemy was prepared to ambush any U.S. Forces that deployed to reinforce Ly Tin. The attacking force was estimated at two companies based on the number of enemy weapons captured and the number of casualties, by body count. It is estimated that the enemy employed one company, 72nd Main Force Battalion, and company size elements of the 409th Sapper Battalion. There is no estimate, by size or unit identification, of the element that attacked CAP K 5.

10. 198th LIB Missions:

- a. Be prepared to reinforce Ly Tin District Headquarters.
- b. Be prepared to relieve or reinforce CAP teams as required.
- c. Ensure Highway One is available and usable for tactical and logistical movement within the Brigade TAOR.

11. Concept of Operations.

Relief/reinforcement of the Ly Tin District Headquarters and CAP teams located within the Brigade TAOR is accomplished by employing all available fire support, gunships and troops if required, at the point of contact. Ly Tin and CAP K 5 were supported with direct support artillery and mortar fires, gunships and flareships. Based on the intelligence of a probable Viet Cong attack on Ly Tin, 2 APC's were positioned at Ly Tin to assist the PF in defending the district Headquarters. 1-46th Infantry deployed relief elements consisting of three companies to the immediate vicinity of both points of contact with the mission of destroying the enemy during his attack or withdrawal from the area. 1-14 Artillery assisted in blocking routes of withdrawal by employing TOT and IEM fires.

12. Execution:

a. Prior to the enemy's attack on 2 January 1968, the 198th LIB had indications that the Viet Cong would increase their offensive activities in hope of gaining a decisive victory before the Vietnamese New Year. Precautionary measures and improvement of defensive positions were implemented by all military forces in the area. The Brigade provided technical and material support to regional units and assisted them in improving their defenses. The Brigade's Engineer company assisted Ly Tin by building four bunkers, and the Chemical Section, 198th LIB, installed ES, Irritant Agent (CS) dispensers, at the District Headquarters. Armored personnel carriers were deployed at critical locations along Highway One, and the Brigade's river force increased its water patrolling activities. The advisory team, the Brigade intelligence liaison officer, and the artillery liaison team, located at Ly Tin, kept the Brigade informed of enemy activities in the area. The Brigade also increased its patrolling and night ambush activities.

b. The initial attack.

(1) At approximately 020204 January 1968, the Viet Cong launched a mortar attack on the Ly Tin District Headquarters and shortly afterward they mortared and employed small arms against Fifth Combined Action Platoon. It was estimated that the enemy mortars were located north of the Ly Tin headquarters in the vicinity of Ly Xuan Island. The American advisory team and the 198th augmentation personnel, except for the night duty officer and the radio telephone operator, were sleeping in their quarters when the mortar attack began. They immediately departed their quarters and went to their fighting positions. Major Nourse, the senior subsector advisor, and SSG Horford, the 198th artillery IAC, went to the command bunker. As Major Nourse was informing the 1-46th Infantry TOC of the enemy mortar fires, SSG Horford was requesting artillery and mortar illumination for the Ly Tin compound. Meanwhile, the Popular Forces (PF) who had been sleeping in the bunkers, were preparing for the enemy ground attack. The APC crews also prepared to defend against the coming ground attack. The request for illumination fires was honored by Battery B, 1-14th Artillery and the organic 81mm mortars of 1-46th Infantry. The 1-46 Infantry TOC notified the Brigade TOC of the developing situation, alerted its units and began preparations to reinforce the District Headquarters.

(2) The district Chief, Captain Duoc, who was also in the compound, informed Major Nourse and SSG Hereford of the direction from which the enemy was approaching the compound. SSG Hereford, at the direction of Major Nourse, requested that 1-46th Infantry initiate blocking fires, and continue illumination of the compound area. The artillery INO section employed the 1-46th Infantry organic 81mm mortars for the HE fire mission engaging a suspected enemy mortar position in the vicinity of coordinates BS 480083. The advisor at Ly Tin requested gunship support from the 1-46th Infantry. The 1-46th Infantry notified the 198th Brigade TOC of the request and the Brigade scrambled a team consisting of two gunships and one flare ship.

(3) During the time (approximately 0223 hours) that the Ly Tin compound was being supported by artillery and mortar fires, the enemy began his attack on the CAP K 5. At the same time, the enemy initiated a mortar attack on the 3-16th Artillery Headquarters to destroy their weapons and/or to prevent them from firing in support of CAP K 5 and Ly Tin. The CAP team notified the 1-46th Infantry TOC of their developing situation, and requested illumination. The requested fires were immediately provided. The 198th Brigade's gunships and flare ship were enroute to Ly Tin, and were diverted by the 1-46th Infantry to the CAP location.

(4) The helicopter team was diverted from Ly Tin to CAP K 5 based on the On Commander's, 1-46th Infantry, evaluation of the situation at each of the locations. Both Ly Tin and CAP K 5 was being attacked but CAP K 5 was a less heavily defended outpost. CAP K 5 was receiving heavy small arms and automatic weapons fire; the enemy had decreased his mortar fire on Ly Tin and was employing small arms, RPG-2 and 57mm recoilless rifle fire in his attack on Ly Tin. Immediate indications were that the enemy ground activities at CAP K 5 were greater than that at Ly Tin. Artillery and mortar fires used in support of Ly Tin were intensified and the enemy's small arms temporarily decreased. Another team of gunships was requested from Brigade to further reinforce Ly Tin. After the helicopters at CAP K 5 had assisted in suppressing the enemy fires, they were employed at Ly Tin also.

c. Ground Attack:

(1) The enemy succeeded in entering the outer perimeter prior to or during their mortar attack. The enemy tied back the three outer rows of barbed wire and crawled through using a strand of combe wire to guide those that followed the lead personnel. After getting through the third row of wire, the enemy spread out on line, and utilizing bangalore torpedoes blew the last row of concertina wire. The APC's immediately engaged the enemy. Three of the enemy, a rocket launcher crew, were observed going into the prone position approximately 75 meters to the right of the APC. The APC engaged the three personnel with the 50 caliber machinegun and killed them at the bunker line. Another crew member of Track 12, SP/4 Edinolf, a machine gunner, engaged another VC who was moving along the bunker line for concealment in order to destroy the track. The track commander then decided to employ a heavier volume of fire from his machineguns along the area in front of the bunkers and beyond for a distance of two to three hundred meters. The other APC, located in the southeastern area of the compound, was also employing a heavy volume of fire to the east and south of the compound. The enemy's attack to destroy the compound was now at its height.

(2) During this period of intense fighting, artillery and mortars were employed to provide continuous illumination and direct support HE fires around the perimeter of the compound. SSG Hereford called for the fires and Major Nourse adjusted them to within 50 meters of the bunkers. SGT Pascua, a member of the advisory team, and SP4 Eiten were also firing 60mm HE and illumination rounds from within the compound. Although the area was illuminated, the enemy continued his attack. The APC located in the northwest corner of the compound was hit twice by a 57mm recoilless rifle. The first round hit the front of the APC on the upper right corner, making a hole approximately two inches in diameter and expending its force into the engine compartment. A piece of shrapnel entered the troop compartment and struck SP4 Gilles in the lower part of the left leg, shattering the bone. Small particles of shrapnel struck SP4 Harris in the right leg from his knee to his ankle. The track commander received shrapnel wounds in his left knee and right foot. To prevent the enemy from disabling the APC and crew, SSG Woods told the driver, SP4 Hochwarter to move the APC to a position between a large building and the west bunker line, a distance of approximately 25 meters. From this position they could still deliver accurate fires on the enemy in the same area. The APC had traveled half the distance when the second 57mm recoilless round struck the front center of the track.

(4) The initial attack was repelled, and from approximately 0330 hours until approximately 0420 the enemy was quiet. During that period illumination continued, two hoistvacs were called and they evacuated the wounded.

(5) Shortly after 0420 the second phase of the assault began, perhaps to recover the enemy dead and their weapons. The compound received numerous small arms, rocket and recoilless rifle fires. Two rounds struck the room of the district chief but he was not in the room when the 57mm rounds hit. The VC persisted with their attack until 0545 hours when contact was finally broken.

13. Remarks:

The enemy was defeated at Ly Tin because of sound tactical planning. The fortified bunkers, gas dispensers, rows of wire and the reinforcement provided by the two APC's enabled the defenders of Ly Tin to destroy the enemy. Accurate supporting fires increased the enemy's casualties and caused the attack to lose its momentum.

14. Results:

1. Enemy losses

KIA 42 (c) KI 0 (p) WI 1 (PW)

Weapons:

2x 57mm RR
5x B40 rockets launchers
1x 40mm rocket launcher
15x .K47
2x B.R.
1x M16
1x M79
1x M1
1x Carbine
5x SMG (misc)
Miscellaneous MG's, demolitions, and ammunition.
22x rockets

2. Friendly losses U.S.

KH 0 WH 1 (evac) WI 2 (minor)

Popular Forces: KH 7 WI 9

James R. Waldie
JAMES R. WALDIE
Colonel, Infantry
Commanding

DISTRIBUTION:

"2"