

From 2/35 ORL 31 July 67

This action deserves its own designation and has been excerpted from the Operations Report and Lessons Learned for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion 35<sup>th</sup> Infantry, period ending 7-31-1967. Troop B, 1<sup>st</sup> Sqd/9<sup>th</sup> Cav, B Co, 2/35<sup>th</sup>, Recon 2/35<sup>th</sup> and C/3-4<sup>th</sup> Cav were all engaged in the Battle of Tan Phong.

27 May-30 May 1967

At 27 1200H, the battalion CP was notified by the S2, 3d Brigade Task Force, of a suspected enemy CP located in Tan Phong Hamlet, Due Pho District, Quang Ngai Province (BS735435). Since the organic forces of the battalion were committed some distance from the area of interest, the battalion commander, LTC Granger, requested and received permission to insert the Blue Team, Troop B, 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry, (Airmobile). The Blue Team (an infantry platoon) was inserted by combat assault east of the target into an LZ vic BS739435 at 1225H. Team Penn (C/3-4 Cav (-) and the Reconnaissance Platoon 2-35 Inf, located about ten kilometers north of LZ LIZ, was given the mission of reserve reaction force (RRF) for the Blue Team to their south.

At 1300H, vic BS738439, the Blues reported observing thirty well armed and equipped enemy with camouflaged uniforms. The Blues engaged the enemy platoon, killed three and called for additional troop support to block what appeared to be a withdrawing enemy. Team Penn, reacting to the call, immediately moved south to block. Gunships from the weapons platoon B/1-9 Cav (Red Team) were dispatched to provide additional fire support. Artillery blocking fires were adjusted to the west of the contact to prevent enemy withdrawal in that direction. See sketch #3.

At 1340H, B/2-35 was released from OPCODE B/1-9 Cav and returned to the 2-35 Inf. They were alerted to move by air to support the growing fight, At 1400H, the Blues had secured an LZ vic BS747472 and the lift ships carrying 1B/2-35 were enroute.

At 1402, the first helicopter carrying 1B landed amidst very heavy enemy fire. The other five helicopters were forced to circle out of the area of contact. One ship was hit and the pilot wounded. Despite his wounds, the pilot was successful in landing his aircraft out of the battle area, 800 meters west of LZ LIZ, Recon (-) and two APC's from C/3-4 Cav were dispatched from LIZ to provide security for the ship.

By 1415H, the Blues, heavily engaged and suffering not only battle casualties but also heat injuries, had requested an emergency resupply of ammunition and water.

At 1430H, a 174th Aviation Company UH-1D was loaded and over the area of contact at an LZ secured by the Blue Team. As the helicopter was making its short final it was hit by a heavy burst of enemy automatic weapons fire and subsequently crashed 200 meters south of the LZ. A squad from the Blues successfully extracted the wounded crew from the burning craft before it exploded.

At 1554H, Company B (-) was airlifted to the vicinity of the downed bird where it linked up with the remaining elements of Recon and C/3-4 Cav. This force then deployed northwest to the hamlet where the Blues were heavily engaged and surrounded.

By 1607H, Team Penn had arrived from the north and was receiving fire from the enemy. Dismounting the battalion reconnaissance platoon, the C/3-4 Cav moved about one thousand meters west and attacked from the northwest. Recon assaulted the enemy from the northeast. See sketch #3.

The enemy, now engaged on three sides, found itself surrounded. They still persisted in their violent attack on the Blue Team and despite accurate gunship fire were able to inflict a few more casualties. As the pressure grew more intense, the enemy slackened their rate of fire and began to evade. The Recon platoon broke through the enemy lines and linked with the Blues. See sketch #4.

Almost simultaneously, the APC's, inflicting heavy enemy losses, broke through to the northwest. Captain Penn, CO, C/3-4 Cav, decided to withdraw the WIA's from the contact area to a secure LZ where the wounded could be evacuated. As his element with the WIA's in the APC's

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moved through the perimeter, Captain Penn's tracks became surrounded. The enemy undoubtedly thought they could stop the armor with their small arms but they paid a huge price in lives before the error was discovered. The armored cavalry succeeded in securing an LZ and at 1620H, the first DUSTOFF was completed.

At 1631H, B/2-35 (-) linked with the friendly elements in the contact area (Tan Phong). After reorganization of the force, B Company deployed to the north for a careful, detailed search for the enemy. Finding the enemy was not difficult as they continued to resist with heavy volumes of small arms and automatic weapons fire. However, the enemy began using the many spider holes and caves that infested Tan Phong in an effort to escape the closing force.

As the units approached the northern end of the hamlet, an airstrike was called in by LTC Granger on an enemy hamlet 500 meters north of Tan Phong. C/3-4 Cav was directed to move to the northwest in an attempt to move around the enemy and block his withdrawal.

In the meantime, Recon began receiving moderate fire to the south, indicating the enemy had left a force behind. The Reconnaissance Platoon turned back through Tan Phong while B/2-35 (-) continued to the hamlet's northern fringe. By this time the large enemy force (estimated company (+) had scattered and the units were receiving only light resistance, See sketch #5.

By 1900H, all elements closed together in a perimeter vic BS730437 to be re-supplied and to extract the Blue Team. 2B was to be lifted in to reinforce the team. At 1918H, 2B attempted a touchdown but again only one bird was able to land in the face of enemy AW fire. It was decided that it was too risky to try the exchange, Gunships, flareships, and an armed AC-47 reported on station. See sketch #6.

At 2100H, A/2-35 was airlifted from the beach to LZ Liz where they assumed responsibility for FSB security. All elements dug in for the night.

At 28 0315H, the force in Tan Phong came under a light enemy mortar attack. Captain Penn, CO, C/3-4 Cav, the only casualty, was mortally wounded, Counter mortar fires from LZ Liz and artillery fires by 2d Bn 9th Arty were placed effectively throughout the area. There was no further contact that night. In view of the enemy strength it was decided to commit further troops into the area in the morning.

At 28 0938H May 1967, C/1-35 (-) was placed OPLAN 2-35 Inf and conducted a heliborne assault vic BS727477. Their assigned mission was to sweep south along the base of the hill mass on the western border of the coastal plain, a likely avenue of enemy withdrawal. Recon/2-35 conducted a heliborne, assault at 1055H west of C/1-35 (-) vic BS715465 and was assigned to sweep the ridge lines and draws in the hill masses to the northwest of Tan Phong. A/2-35 departed LZ Liz on a sweep to the west not only to aid B/2-35 in the search of the battlefield, but also to establish contact. C/3-4 Cav was assigned blocking positions southeast of Recon. The Blue Team was extracted and replaced by 2B at 0916H. See sketch #7.

The simultaneous sweeps of the Tan Phong area on the 28th produced several small contacts. However, fire support by the gunships of the 174th Aviation Company and B/1-9 Cav (airmobile) accounted for the vast majority of the enemy dead. A prisoner and a Hoi Chanh identified the enemy unit as the 60th Bn 1st VC Regiment. Undoubtedly, the majority of the battalion was in the area.

As the 2-35 Inf elements pursued the enemy, they forced him to break into the clearings and rice paddies. The rockets and "Mini" gun fire of the armed "Hueys" killed or wounded all observed enemy. The units on the ground forced the enemy into hiding to avoid the increasing onslaught. Efforts to capture prisoners failed as the enemy repeatedly fought to their death. By the end of the day, 87 enemy lay dead on the battlefield, killed for the most part by the gunships. A/2-35 and C/3-4 Cav swept back to LZ Liz where they provided FSB security. B/2-35, C/1-35 (-), and Recon/2-35

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were re-supplied and assigned the mission of saturation ambush patrols for the night. Recon/2-35 was placed OPCON B/2-35.

By 2215H, all elements were in position. B/2-35 with OPCON of Recon occupied four ambush sites at the mouth of the Song Tra Cau Valley: Recon located vic BS713424; 2B located vic BS712425; B (-) located vic BS713433; and 3B located vic BS715438. C/1-35 had three ambushes north of Highway 515 positioned along the road. See sketch #7.

At 29 0240H May 1967, the ambush of Company B (-), located vicinity BS713433, came under an intense enemy ground and mortar attack. See sketch #8. Using camouflage and stealth, at least one enemy company surrounded the ambush position undetected. The enemy initiated the attack with accurate mortar fire. Efforts to counter the mortar fire with their own 60mm mortar and the 4.2 mortar platoon from LZ Liz proved useless. The enemy was using at least two mortars which could not be located. As the mortars were raining their deadly fire, the enemy began a concentrated ground attack. Captain Ralph Walker, CO, Company B, although mortally wounded by the initial mortar attack, rallied his men into a perimeter and requested artillery fire support. His courage and determination provided the catalyst for the initial defense of the position and undoubtedly prevented the unit from being overrun. Captain Walker died forty minutes later. When the unit moved from its linear ambush into a perimeter, it inadvertently closed around an enemy position. The two enemy were swiftly killed.

At 0300H, Medivac was requested to come to LZ Liz where it would remain on alert until the contact area was secure. At the same time the aircraft commander of the armed AC-47 "Dragon Ship" reported that he would be in the area of contact at 0320H. Armed HU-1C's were on station with a helicopter flare ship and began firing under the guidance of the 2d platoon leader, who had assumed command. The enemy continued to fire his mortars although the volume was not as heavy. Efforts to locate these mortars proved fruitless.

It was later discovered that the enemy had used a mud hut as a firing pit. A hole two feet in diameter was cut in the roof through which he fired his rounds. This tactic prevented observation of the muzzle flash and because of the muffled noise, made it virtually impossible to determine with accuracy how far away the mortars were.

Meanwhile, the gunships concentrated their fire on ten enemy in a rice paddy. As the enemy attack intensified, the men from B Company threw white phosphorus grenades to mark the proximity of an enemy automatic weapons position. This enabled the armed helicopters from both the 174th Aviation Company and B/1-9 Cav (airmobile) to engage the enemy accurately.

At 0325H it was decided to move the rest of B Company and the Reconnaissance Platoon to reinforce the besieged platoon.

At 0346H, LTC Granger, over the contact area in his command and control helicopter, decided to commit C/2-35 (-) in a reinforcing action from the east. All elements, as they moved toward the point of contact, made light contact which resulted in several more enemy dead.

At 0405H a medevac helicopter carrying the company executive officer successfully made it into the perimeter and evacuated three wounded. On its arrival 1LT Russel Chapman assumed command. The departure of the medevac signaled a renewed enemy attack. At 0410H 1LT Chapman was wounded in the head, but courageously continued to command.

At 0411H, Recon and IB attempting to break through the attack from the southwest came under intense automatic weapons fire. Maneuvering against the position, the reconnaissance platoon overran it and Captured the M1919A6 machine gun. This was the last strong effort made by the enemy to block the relief force.

At 0434H, the enemy tried for the last time to break through the unit's staunch perimeter. He assaulted in mass from the east under a murderous barrage of enemy mortar fire. Some of the enemy

broke through the lines and into the perimeter but that was where they died. Orders were issued that no one would leave their foxholes so that if anyone was seen moving in the perimeter he would be enemy. The tactic worked.

At 0446H, the contact had lightened considerably. Medevac was again requested and the helicopter landed in the LZ amidst suppressive fire from the perimeter. By 0550 all contact had been broken by the enemy, the casualties had been evacuated and a resupply of ammunition had been effected.

At 0617H, C/3-4 Cav, with one platoon of A/2-35, and A/2-35 (-) departed LZ Liz on two separate axes to the west to sweep the flanks of the contact area to reestablish contact with the enemy. At 0627H, C/1-35 closed with B/2-35. See sketch #9.

At 0854H, B/1-9 Cav was placed OPCODE 2-35 Inf. The Blue Team conducted a combat assault vic BS694423 and moved east along, the Song Tra Cau Valley into prepared blocking positions of C/1-35 and C/3-4 Cav at the mouth of the valley floor. A/2-35 swept south and southwest of the point of contact detaining large numbers of military age males who were hiding in a Buddhist temple. They also discovered five tons of stored rice in the same temple. The remaining elements made light contact while flushing the Viet Cong from bunkers, caves and tunnels.

At 1030H, Company B was extracted by helicopter and taken to LZ Montezuma where they met their new CO, Captain Lindsey. At 1800H, A/2-35, C/3-4 Cav, and Recon/2-35 closed to LZ Liz, C/1-35 closed to a night location about 800 meters west-southwest of LZ Liz.

At 30 0930H May 1967, C/1-35 crossed the Song Tra Cau River, the southern AO line, and was returned to the control of the 1-35 Inf.

Results of the three day contact were as follows:

(1) Friendly casualties:

3 KIA  
27 WIA  
1 DOW

(2) Enemy losses, personnel:

116 KIA  
8 CIA  
119 Detained

(3) Enemy losses, weapons:

Crew served:	7
57 recoilless rifle	1
60mm mortar w/sight	1
B-40 rocket launcher	1
RPD LMG	3
cal. 30 LMG	1
Individual:	34
Carbine, M-1, .30 cal	3
Carbine, M-2, .30 cal	2
7.62 SKS	10
AK-47	6

BAR	3
M-79, 40mm GL	3
SMG, Type unknown	3
Pistol, 9mm	1
7.62, Soviet Carbine, Mosin Nagant	1
7.62 SMG, PPSH-41	1
7.62, M-14	1

27 May

Team Penn. C/3/4 ~~Ann~~ Cav (-) & Rcn. 2/35<sup>th</sup> - start + 104 Nof L2

Red Team - Gunships from B/1/9 Cav

Blue Team - Troop B 1<sup>st</sup> Sqn. / 9<sup>th</sup> Cav

Target Tan Phung Enemy CA BS 735435

1225H Blue CA to BS 739435

1300H - Blue spot 30 enemy at BS 738439

1300H Penn move South to Block

1300H artillery to west of contact site 543

1340 Blues est L2 at BS 7417472 to 1/B/235 to CA to

1402 18 CA ~~hit~~ <sup>to Hot</sup> to L2 - pilot wounded, land at 800m W of L2

Rcn(-) + 2 APC fr. C/3/4 Cav went to secure

1430 Blues need supply, 174<sup>th</sup> ~~APC~~ aviation CO, hit crashed 200m S of L2  
Sqd. Blues got crew out & halo exploded

1554 Rest Co B(-) CA to vic crashed halo, linked @ Rcn(-) + ~~Blues~~ <sup>C/3/4 Cav</sup> at site  
Then move NW to where Blues (4/B) were surrounded.

1607 Team Penn arrive, ~~move~~ <sup>leave</sup> Rcn, move 1000m west & attack from NW  
Rcn attack from NE (543)

Enemy now surrounded, Rcn broke thru to Blues (544) almost same time,  
C/3/4 broke thru from N.W.

1631 B(-) arrive & link up & move to N (enemy escape route)

Air strike on Hamlet 500m N. of Tan Phung

C/3/4 move NW to block

same time Rcn, in South got fire, meaning enemy left some behind  
so Rcn turned back through Tan Phung while B235(-) cont. to T.P.  
Northern edge. (545)

1900 all closed BS 730437 re supply & extract Blues

2 B was trying to CA in for Blue TM exchange but L2 Hot & couldn't  
Gunships, flareships & AC-47 on scene. (546)

2100H A2/35 from beach to L2 for security

over

28 MAY

0315 - Night Lager mortared & Capt. Penn CO 2/3/4 Cav KIA

0938 - C/1-35(-) opens fire 2/35 CA to B5727 477 & sweep S along hill edge.

1055<sup>Recn</sup> e A to B5 715 465 sweep ridge

A 2/35 Lu. Liz sweep west + <sup>try</sup> link (W) B 1/2/35

C/3/4 Cav block S. of Recn

0916 - 2 B replace Blue TM by helo (5th 7)

60th BN 1st UC Regiment

~~at~~ units sweep Tan Phong, drive UC to open 174<sup>th</sup> + B/1/9 had VC KIA

by days and 87 VC KIA

A/235 <sup>& C/3/4 Cav</sup> back to Liz for FSB security

Recn Alarmed opens fire B/2:35

2215 <sup>(Recn + B)</sup> Four ambushes Recn → 713 424, 2 B 712 425, B(-) 713 433,  
3 B - 715 438

C/1-35 - 3 ambushes N of Hwy 515 along road (5th 7)

29<sup>th</sup>

0240 B(-) ambush 713 433 grid + mort attack (5th 8)

0325 move rest of B Co <sup>+ Recn</sup> from ambushes to contact

0346 C/2/35(-) com + form East.

0405 Lt Chapman B Co XO landed with comm. (wounded)

0411 Recn + 1 B, from S.W., recd AW fire in attempt to reinforce B(-), overrun M.G. loc & captured M1919 A6 MG

0434 UC attack B(-) from E. mort & assault. some thru but died

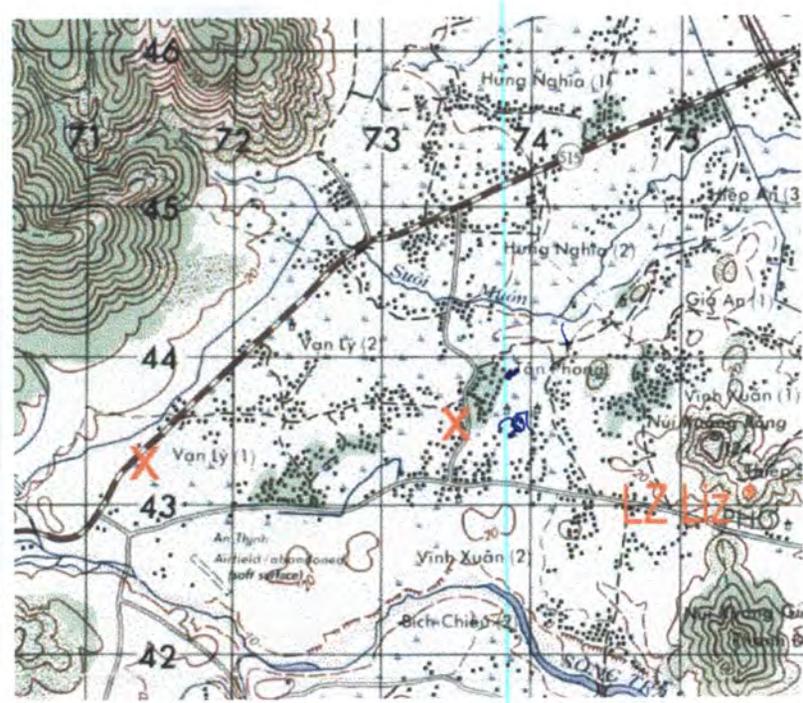
0446 contact heightened

0550 gone & resupply close

0617 - C/3/4 Cav + plt A 2/35 + A 2/35(-) depart 142 to reinforce on fact.

Sweep W on 2 separate axis

0627 - C/1/35 close (W) B 2/35 (5th 9)



29 km

01030 - B to Montezuma