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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
20TH MILITARY HISTORY DETACHMENT  
APO San Francisco 96375

AVHCS-MH

10 February 1969

SUBJECT: Letter of Transmittal

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1. Reference: Combat After Action Report, The Battle for TAY NINH (U), dated 7 February 1969, Headquarters, 25th Infantry Division, APO San Francisco 96225.
2. Transmitted are copies of a document entitled: Tactical Situation, Estimate of Situation and Operations, which should be attached to the above reference. This document was prepared and utilized for personal use by LTC Duquenne A. Wolfe, 028187, Armor, who commanded the 1st Brigade, 25th Infantry Division during the period 5-27 August 1968.
3. Information contained in this document was considered and utilized as appropriate in the above referenced report. The document was omitted from the original report due to administrative channels in which the historical report was submitted.

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1 Incl  
as

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2 Incl  
Added 1 incl  
2. MFR, 23 Nov 68

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SUBJECT: Tactical Situation, Estimate of Situation, and Operations

## 1. Tactical Situation:

### a. Tactical Area of Responsibility (TAOR) of 1st Bde

#### (1) Period 5-23 Aug 68

The 1st Bde TAOR consisted of an area approximately 60 kilometers in width (east to west) and approximately 85 kilometers in depth (south to north). The boundaries of the 1st Bde TAOR were as follows (see Map Tab A).

#### (2) Period 24-27 Aug 68

The 1st Bde TAOR consisted of the same area as in the period 5-23 Aug 68 less the eastern third of the 1st Bde TAOR which was given to the 2d Bde, 25th Inf Div. The new eastern boundary of the 1st Bde, 25th Inf Div being generally the north-south 39 grid line (see map Tab A).

### b. Missions of the 1st Bde

#### (1) Period 5-23 Aug 68

The missions of the 1st Bde during the period 5-23 Aug 68 were as follows with all missions considered of equal importance: (see Tab B of Incl 3 map of 1st Bde Bases and Tactical Operation).

(a) Secure and defend all US bases in the 1st Bde TAOR.

(1) TAY NINH Tactical Operations Support Base (TOSB), which was a base capable of combat service support for one brigade for tactical field operations.

(2) DAU TIENG Tactical Operations Support Base (TOSB), which was a base capable of combat service support for one brigade for tactical field operations.

(3) BAU CO Fire Support Base (FSB), which contained four 175mm guns.

(4) BUELL II FSB, which contained one battery of 155mm self propelled howitzers and one battery of 105mm howitzers.

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(5) RAWLINS III FSB, which contained one battery of 105mm howitzers.

(6) NUI BA DEN Signal Facility atop NUI BA DEN Mountain.

(7) 588th Eng Bn Rock Crusher Site, located at the base of NUI BA DEN Mountain.

(b) Each day sweep on foot for enemy mines and secure (by posting combat maneuver forces) the Main Supply Route (MSR) in the 1st Bde TAOR from the village of CO DAU MA to TAY NINH TOSB to BUELL II FSB to BAU CO DSB to the Rock Crusher Site to RAWLINS III FSB to DAU TIENG TOSB, which was a total road distance of approximately 98 kilometers.

(c) Conduct offensive operations to destroy or capture the main VC and NVA forces in the 1st Bde TAOR.

(d) Support the Internal Defense and Development (ID/D) of TAY NINH Province to include the defense of TAY NINH City in combined operations with the Vietnamese Armed Forces of TAY NINH Province.

## (2) Period 24-27 Aug 68

The missions of the 1st Bde during the period 24-27 Aug 68 were the same as the period 5-23 Aug 68 with the exception that the secure and defend mission of DAU TIENG TOSB was assigned to the 2d Bde, 25th Inf Div, and the 1st Bde was to consider the sweep and secure mission of the MSR of lowest priority in relation to the other three missions, and to accomplish this sweep and secure mission as best as possible with the forces available and as the tactical situation permitted.

### c. Forces available to the 1st Bde

#### (1) Period 5-23 Aug 68

During the period 5-23 Aug 68 the 1st Bde had the following combat maneuver and DS combat support forces:

(a) Infantry: 3/22 Inf (-"C" Co), 2/27 Inf (-"C" Co).

(b) Mechanized Infantry: 1/5 Inf (M), 4/23 Inf (M).

(c) Armor: 2/34 Armor (-"B" Co, -"C" Co, -1 plt of "A" Co).

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- (d) Artillery: 7/11 Arty Bn (105mm) DS.
- (e) Division Combat Engrs: A Co (-), 65th Engr Bn.
- (2) Period 24-27 Aug 68:

During the period 24-27 Aug 68 the 1st Bde had the following forces:

- (a) Infantry: 3/22 Inf (-"C" Co)
- (b) Mechanized Infantry: 1/5 Inf (M)
- (c) Artillery: 7/11 Arty Bn (-A Battery) 105mm - DS
- (d) Division Combat Engrs: "A" Co, (-), 65th Engr Bn.

## 2. Estimate of the situation:

Significant factors of the enemy, weather, terrain and forces available which were considered by me in my estimate of the situation were as follows:

### a. Enemy:

#### (1) Period 5-16 Aug 68

During this period the enemy 5th VC and 9th VC Divisions were in the preparatory phase of the long awaited Viet Cong Third Offensive. The period was characterized by 1st Bde forces contacting enemy platoon and company sized units engaged in reconnaissance activities and the building of forward assembly areas (base camp) in the jungles close to 1st Bde bases in the TAOR. This enemy activity was conducted generally during the hours of darkness; except in the Michelin Rubber Plantation where the enemy engaged in active daylight harassment actions (sniping, ambushes, and mining of the roads) to attempt to keep US forces out of this area. However, in the rest of the 1st Bde TAOR the enemy attempted to avoid contact with US forces.

#### (2) Period 17-27 Aug 68

During this period the enemy launched the first phase of the VC Third Offensive with six (6) fresh, fully combat ready VC infantry regiments, two (2) separate local force VC battalions and two (2) anti-aircraft battalions.

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As learned subsequently by captured documents and POW interrogations the enemy's assigned mission was to destroy the 25th Inf Div.

The enemy launched 14 attacks of battalion and regimental strength against the 1st Bde bases and units in the 1st Bde TAOR during this period.

## b. Weather and hours of daylight:

The month of Aug 68 was the middle period of the southwest Monsoon season in South Vietnam. The weather was characterized by hot humid days with very heavy rain showers starting in the late afternoon and continuing for several hours. During the month of Aug 68 in South Vietnam there was approximately 12 hours of daylight available from approximately 0700-1900 hours each day. This was important because the enemy conducted most of his movements of troops during the hours of darkness; and better than 75% of the attacks by the enemy were conducted during the hours of darkness.

## c. Terrain:

### (1) Active part of 1st Bde TAOR:

The southern half of the 1st Bde TAOR (approximately 60 kilometers wide and 45 kilometers in depth) constituted the active part of the 1st Bde operations in its TAOR during this period (see Tab B).

This area was so large that previously it was covered by two (2) US brigades of the 25th Inf Div (1st and 3d Bdes); however, because of the expected threat to Saigon, the 3d Bde of the 25th Inf Div had been committed to the Saigon area.

### (2) Type of Terrain and Trafficability:

The southern half of the 1st Bde TAOR consisted of flat terrain, the western part of which was mostly agricultural open land with patches of forest while the eastern part was one-third (1/3) agricultural open land and the remaining two-thirds (2/3) consisted of the four (4) large rubber plantations and some forest areas.

There were relatively good dirt roads through the central part of this area and the rubber plantations had many good roads completely criss-crossing them like a city street network.

The trafficability for track vehicles was good on the roads in the 1st Bde TAOR, but only fair cross country; however it was poor in the rice paddy areas and heavy jungle areas.

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The tracked vehicles could move rapidly through the rubber plantations on the road network or move slowly off the roads between the rubber trees. However, in an attempt to prevent enemy ambushes along Route 26 in the CAU KHOI Rubber Plantation and along Route 239 in the BEN CUI Rubber Plantation, the rubber trees were cut down approximately 50 meters on each side of the road in an engineer project conducted several months ago. Unfortunately, the cut trees were left in place and constituted an obstacle to track vehicle movement off the road, which later proved to be a considerable disadvantage to 1st Bde armored elements fighting in both of these areas.

d. Forces available:

(1) Period 5-23 Aug 68:

During this period the 1st Bde had the following combat maneuver forces assigned:

(a) Two (2) mechanized infantry battalions (total of 6 mechanized companies available).

(b) Two (2) rifle infantry battalions, each with only 3 of their 4 rifle companies. (Total of 5 rifle companies out of 6 available for daily use because 1 rifle company committed to defense of NUI BA DiN Signal Facility atop the mountain).

(c) One (1) armor battalion which had only one (1) tank company of two (2) platoons plus Bn and Co headquarters tanks. (Total of 15 tanks).

The two (2) mechanized infantry battalions assigned to the 1st Bde, constituted 100% of the mechanized infantry units available to the 25th Inf Div because the third organic mechanized infantry battalion of the division was with the 3d Bde, 25th Inf Div and the 3d Bde was under the operational control of the US Capital Military Assistance (CMAC) Command in the Saigon area.

The armor assigned to the 1st Bde constituted approximately 50% of the available tanks to the 25th Inf Div.

The two (2) infantry battalions (less one rifle company each) assigned to the 1st Bde, constituted approximately 25% of the available rifle infantry of the 25th Inf Div because the 25th Inf Div had been given operational control of the 506th Inf of the 101st Airborne to replace the 3d Bde, 25th Inf which was OPCON to the US CMAC in the Saigon area. Thus in the 2d Bde TAOR, the 25th Inf Div employed two

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brigades (the 2d Bde, 25th Inf Div and the 506th Inf, 101st Airborne Div) of infantry and the armored cavalry squadron of the 25th Inf Div.

## (2) Period 24-27 Aug 68:

During this period the 1st Bde TAOR was decreased to two-thirds of its original size with the eastern third given to the 2d Bde. The 1st Bde had the following combat maneuver forces assigned during this period:

(a) One (1) mechanized infantry battalion (total of 3 mechanized infantry companies).

(b) One (1) rifle infantry battalion (total of 3 rifle infantry companies, with one of these companies committed atop NUI BA DEN Mountain).

e. Important considerations in my estimate of the situation were as follows:

(1) There were seven (7) US bases to secure and defend, spread 42 kilometers in width and 25 kilometers in depth, in the 1st Bde TAOR. All of them required combat maneuver units to help defend them, especially at night.

(2) Although the defense of the City of TAY NINH was not vital to the US defenses from a purely tactical standpoint, it was very important, for political and psychological reasons, to show that SVN and US forces could prevent the VC from capturing and holding a Provincial Capital City, as they had done at HUE during the TET Offensive.

(3) The security and defense of Saigon had first priority in SVN. It was expected that the Third Offensive of the VC had the objective of invading and destroying Saigon. A large number of SVN and US troops were positioned in and around Saigon during this period. Consequently an "economy of force" role for US troops in the outlying provinces of III Corps was necessary. Thus, the strength of 1st Bde forces were to be kept at a minimum.

Further, US units of II Field Force were told that the enemy would attack the outlying provinces of III Corps in an attempt to draw US and SVN forces from the defense of Saigon. Thus, units like the 1st Bde located in an outlying province were expected to fight the enemy without expectation of reinforcements, unless they experienced large scale enemy attacks from the main VC/NVA forces. This meant to

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me that I had to provide a reserve force from 1st Bde forces to act as a reaction force or reinforcement force in case of enemy attacks in the 1st Bde TAOR.

(4) The US bases in the 1st Bde TAOR were dependent upon resupply from truck convoys coming daily from the 25th Inf Div Base at CU CHI. The 1st Bde units used an average of 6,000 artillery rounds each 24 hour period during a moderate day of enemy activity. Consequently the maintenance and security of the MSR in the 1st Bde TAOR was vital for sustained tactical operations of the 1st Bde units.

(5) Despite the great advantages afforded to US forces in Vietnam by the use of troop carrier, gun ship and cargo helicopters, there was an insufficient number to support the desired airmobile assault operations and cargo resupply missions of the US units of II Field Forces during this period. The 1st Bde could normally expect only one (1) airmobile company (10 Huey helicopters capable of carrying approximately 60 men in one lift and 1 Huey for command and control) each day.

Thus if contact with a small enemy force occurred, airmobile reinforcement would be tactically sound. However if contact with a large enemy force occurred, then this piecemeal commitment of troops could provide the enemy the opportunity to defeat the reinforcing element in detail.

Consequently, I realized that there was a vital need to maintain and secure the MSR in the 1st Bde TAOR to effect both reinforcements and resupply. This was to prove true during the enemy attacks in the VC Third Offensive in the 1st Bde TAOR.

(6) The southern part of the 1st Bde TAOR was a very large (an area in which normally two (2) brigades operated); however there was a fairly good road network connecting all the US bases in the 1st Bde TAOR and the cross country trafficability was fair in more than 50% of the area.

(7) The combat maneuver forces available to the 1st Bde were predominately armored forces (6 mechanized infantry companies, 1 tank company and 3 reconnaissance platoons - a total of approximately 160 armored personnel carriers and 15 tanks) with great armor protected fire power and good road mobility as well as fair cross-country mobility in the southern half of the TAOR, which was the most important area to both the US and SVN interests in TAY NINH Province.

(8) There were essentially only South Vietnamese Regional Forces (RF) and Popular Forces (PF) in TAY NINH Province. That is to say that

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there were no Army of Vietnam (ARVN) military forces stationed in TAY NINH Province except for two small batteries of artillery committed to defense of Vietnamese installations. Further the RF/PP forces were committed to defense of their fixed installations and hamlets and were not available for offensive operations in combined operations in the 1st Bde TAOR, except in a very limited way in daytime and never at night.

## 3. Tactical operations

### a. Concept of operations

#### (1) General:

Based on my estimate of the situation which considered all the factors of missions assigned, enemy situation, terrain, weather and forces available, I determined that the 1st Bde general concept of operations would be as follows:

##### (a) Tactical disposition of 1st Bde forces and bases:

Approximately 80% of the combat maneuver forces of the 1st Bde would be tactically disposed in a ring of defensive positions around TAY NINH TOSB and the northern part of TAY NINH City (which contained the province government, province chief headquarters and US province military and civil headquarters) to provide the following:

(1) Provide an outer ring of US defensive positions to reinforce the inner ring of South Vietnamese RF/PP defensive positions around TAY NINH TOSB and TAY NINH City to intercept the main VC/NVA attacking forces and destroy these before they can reach their objectives.

(2) Provide maximum flexibility to counter-attack with combat maneuver forces should the enemy penetrate the outer and/or inner rings of defenses of TAY NINH TOSB and TAY NINH City.

(3) Provide adequate dispersion of combat maneuver forces so that it would be highly improbable that the enemy could attack all US bases simultaneously. However, the US bases were to be positioned so as to be mutually supporting by the fires of a minimum of two batteries of artillery.

(b) Daytime: Offensive operations designed to find, fix and destroy the enemy in the 1st Bde TAOR. All units of the 1st Bde conducting "reconnaissance in force" (RIF) operations would move to contact

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using maximum security to prevent ambush; however, upon making contact with the enemy, they were to move aggressively to fix the enemy in position and with maximum use of firepower and maneuver close with the enemy and destroy him by close assault.

(c) Nightime: Defense/offensive operations designed to stop, repel and eject enemy attacks on US or SVN bases and follow-up with counter-attacks to destroy the enemy attacking forces.

## (2) Specific:

(a) Conduct aggressive daylight armored reconnaissance in force operations (RIF) in the southern half of the 1st Bde TAOR to find, fix and destroy the enemy, and also to deny the enemy free movement during daylight hours, especially in the MICHELEN and BEN CUI Rubber Plantations which were astride the main enemy north-south infiltration route from "War Zone C."

(b) Conduct aggressive night ambushes of platoon and company size around the 1st Bde bases, TAY NINH City, and the main enemy N-S infiltration route, to interdict his routes of night movement and/or intercept and destroy his forces moving to forward attack positions.

(c) Conduct aggressive airmobile infantry RIF operations in the forest near 1st Bde bases to find, fix and destroy enemy VC and NVA main force units; and also to find enemy forward base camps and destroy them.

(d) Utilize armored task forces to sweep and secure the main supply route in the 1st Bde TAOR daily.

(e) Conduct daylight combined US-SVN offensive operations with RF/PP forces in TAY NINH and province especially in cordon and search operations designed to destroy VC infrastructure in the villages and hamlets in the 1st Bde TAOR. Encourage and support nighttime combined US-SVN defensive/offensive operations in the Bde TAOR.

## b. Operations

### (1) Period 5-16 Aug 68

During this period the 1st Bde conducted many successful daylight armored RIF operations in the southern part of the 1st Bde TAOR especially in the rubber plantations of the MICHELIN, BEN CUI and the BIG RUBBER. Also many successful daylight airmobile infantry RIF operations were conducted in the forests of "War Zone C."

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Also 1st Bde units conducted many night ambushes during the period of which several were successful in ambushing enemy platoon size reconnaissance and supply units.

These 1st Bde operations resulted in the destruction of a large number of enemy base camp fortifications (bunkers, fighting holes, trenchwork) and inflicted approximately 125 enemy KIA (body count) with but a few US casualties.

Further, combined daylight US/SVN operations were very successful during this period, especially the cordon and search operations. One such combined 1st Bde and RF/PF cordon and search operations of the city of DAU TIENG on or about 14 Aug 68 netted 107 male detainees of draft age which was one of the most successful cordon and search operations in South Vietnam; another one conducted in a village SW of TAY NINH City netted 25 detainees of which 5 were determined to be VC and 11 were VC suspects while the remainder were determined to be draft dodgers.

## (2) Period 17-23 Aug 68

### (a) 1st Bde ambush of 275 VC Regt (17 Aug 68)

At approximately 2230 hours, 17 Aug 68 the long awaited VC "Third Offensive" began with the successful ambush of the lead battalion of the enemy 275 VC Regt by a reinforced platoon of the 2/27 Inf just east of TAY NINH City (see No. (1) of Map of Tab B Incl 3). The 275th VC Regiment was attempting to attack TAY NINH City. The ambush resulted in 5 enemy KIA by body count. But more important this contact with the 275th VC Regiment was exploited by the 1st Bde by attacking this regiment with all artillery and mortars available as well as gun ships for over two hours causing over 200 possible casualties to this enemy regiment. The important result of this action was that the 275th Inf Regt was turned back from its attack objective and did not participate in the subsequent battle for TAY NINH City.

Another important advantage gained by this action was the advance warning of large scale attacks beginning in the 1st Bde TAOR. As a consequence of this successful ambush, all US and SVN bases and units in the 1st Bde TAOR were warned to prepare for an enemy attack that night which indeed did come some 3 hours later that night.

Further there was a very effective example of Combat Intelligence resulting from this successful ambush. The 1st Bde S-2 had informed me of the importance of establishing unit identifications of enemy units in the 1st Bde TAOR. The II Field Force Commanding General had stressed the need to find and identify the enemy VC divisions in

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III Corps in order to determine the threat and allow him to react to it quickly. Thus as soon as the 2/27 ambush was successfully sprung I contacted the Bn CO, 2/27 Inf (LTC Kenny), and ordered him personally to go the area of contact, strip the bodies of all clothes, weapons, equipment, and documents and bring them immediately to 1st Bde Headquarters.

At approximately 2330, one hour after the ambush LTC Kenny brought the clothing, one (1) pistol, two (2) AK-47 rifles, and documents. These documents established the identity of two of the enemy KIA as officers, one the Bn ID of one battalion of the 275th VC Regt of the 5th VC Division and the other as a platoon leader of this battalion. This Order of Battle intelligence was sent by radio to higher headquarters immediately.

(b) 1st Bde Defensive/Offensive of BUELL II FSB against 273 VC Regt (18 Aug 68):

At approximately 0130 hours, 18 Aug 68 some 3 hours after the successful action against the 275th VC Regt east of TAY NINH City, a very heavy enemy attack fell on BUELL II Fire Support Base (FSB) which was located approximately 7 kilometers due north of TAY NINH City (see No. (2) on map - Tab B Incl #3).

Three battalions of the 273d VC Regiment, supported by an unidentified anti-aircraft battalion, attacked by fire (mortars, RPG rockets, 12.7 MG and small arms) and by close assaults on north, south and west of the 1st Bde BUELL II FSB, for approximately 3 1/2 hours.

The enemy, with a strength of approximately 1,400 men, had moved under cover of darkness from the forest located north of BUELL II FSB. Of special interest is the fact that the enemy formed up each battalion approximately 100-200 meters from the protective wire of BUELL II FSB. Each battalion did a dress-right-dress type formation and then each man dug a foxhole; extensive wire communication wire was laid; weapon positions were dug for mortars, RPG rockets and anti-aircraft machine guns. After the battle both from the air and ground inspection the symmetrical lines of individual foxholes and weapons positions were found along with the equipment and weapons and the many enemy dead.

Artillery fires from 1st Bde bases (TAY NINH TOSB, BAU CO FSB, RAWLINS III FSB, and DAU TIENG TOSB) pounded the enemy forces. At the same time C-47 flare ships lighted up the area while the helicopters gun ships raked the area with mini-gun and rocket fire, and tactical fighter bombers bombed and strafed the enemy positions.

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The US forces at BUELL II (one battery of 105mm, one battery of self propelled 155mm, one mechanized infantry company, one rifle company and 4 tanks - a total force of approximately 250 men) poured out a continuous stream of fire during the entire engagement; the artillery firing point blank using "Beehive" and "Firecracker" ammunition, the mechanized infantry employing 50 cal and M-60 machine guns and the infantry employing small arms from the bunker line as well as their organic mortars from within the perimeter.

The many enemy assaults never breached the protective wire of BUELL II Fire Support Base. By 0500 hours the enemy attacks by fire and ground assaults ceased.

1st Bde artillery and gun ships pursued by fire the enemy formations in the darkness - while all 1st Bde maneuver units in the area were alerted to pursue the enemy at first light.

At first light armored units from TAY NINH TOSB, BUELL II FSB, BAU CAU FSB and the Rock Crusher Site surrounded the battle field area and were successful in capturing 16 of the enemy.

A hasty search of the battle area revealed 187 enemy KIA (body count) most of which were killed 50-200 meters from the protective wire of BUELL II FSB. Since then, hasty enemy grave sites have been discovered 500-1500 meters from the BUELL II FSB which shall eventually bring the enemy casualties to well over 250. The US forces at BUELL II suffered 3 KIA and approximately 25 WIA.

## (c) Defense of NUI BA DEN Signal Facility

During the same night that BUELL II FSB was being attacked, the NUI BA DEN Signal Facility atop NUI BA DEN Mountain was assaulted by the enemy at approximately 0200 hours, 13 Aug 68. The enemy consisting of approximately 300 men, carrying approximately 50 satchel explosive charges, (later 50 more satchel charges were found, captured after the battle), in an attempt to destroy the Signal Facility. (See No. (3) Map of Incl #3).

After approximately two hours of heavy fighting, "A" Co, 3/22 Inf, using small arms and grenades, successfully repulsed the repeated assaults of the enemy attacking force. A sweep of the battle area in daylight revealed 10 enemy KIA (body count), which was later increased to 18 enemy KIA by searching further down the countain slopes. The defending US infantry company suffered 5 KIA and 23 WIA. The enemy objective to destroy the Signal Facility failed, for not one item of signal equipment was damaged or destroyed.

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(d) 1st Bde Offensive Operations to clear TAY NINH City  
(18 Aug 68):

During the same night several of the RF/PP outposts of TAY NINH City were attacked by fire while one PP outpost in the extreme southeastern part of the city was assaulted and captured by the enemy.

At approximately 0900 hours 18 Aug 68, the province chief of TAY NINH informed the 1st Bde that two (2) local VC separate battalions had entered TAY NINH City from the south and west during the night. He requested that the 1st Bde help his RF/PP forces drive the enemy out.

A combined operation of US and SVN forces was quickly agreed upon by the province chief and myself. The plan was for armored task forces of the 1st Bde to block the two Southern parts of TAY NINH City while RF forces would attack through the city from north to south (see No. 4 of Map - Tab B Incl #3).

The 1st Bde sent two armored task forces that morning to establish blocking positions in the southern parts of TAY NINH City. One of the armored task forces (TF 2/34 (-)) originating from TAY NINH TOSB broke through an enemy VC company blocking access to the MSR (Route 22) and then quickly took up a blocking position in the southwestern part of the city. The second armored task force (TF 4/23 (-)) moved rapidly without opposition to the southeastern part of the city.

Just prior to the movement of these armored forces I had flown in my Command and Control helicopter over TAY NINH City. I had observed that the population of the city had fled, for protection, from their homes to the CAO DAI Temple grounds located in the northeastern part of the city.

I also had flown over the southeastern part of the city to recon the enemy captured PP outpost and in doing so my C and C helicopter received ground fire from approximately 300 enemy VC. This ground fire wounded the pilot and caused slight damage to the ship. Consequently I ordered TF 4/23 (-) to attack this enemy and fix them in position as well as to gain a strong foothold in the southeastern part of the city.

TF 4/23 (-) attacked aggressively and became heavily engaged in a close in fire fight with this enemy force from 1130 hours until dark that day. Acting on orders from the CG, 25th Inf Div, I strictly complied with his orders that no mortars, artillery, rocket fire or air strikes be used in the city fighting in order to prevent injury to the population or damage to property.

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TF 4/23 (-) advanced with its armored personnel carriers and ground infantry approximately 1000 meters into the city until I ordered them to hold their position and fix the enemy, while the RF attacked from the north. In this street fighting the TF 4/23 (-) killed 42 enemy (body count) but suffered 8 KIA, 35 WIA and had two APCs knocked out from heavy RPG 2 and 7 rocket fire.

Despite my personal urging of the province chief to have his RF forces attack southward as agreed, the RF forces did not attack but took a defensive position in the center of the city. Further, the province chief refused to commit his 10 armored personnel carriers, even in an overwatching fire role, because he stated that if any APCs were knocked out he could not get replacements.

At 1600 hours the province chief informed me that his RF units must return to their normal nighttime fortified positions to protect the city and his province headquarters.

Consequently, I took operational control of "B" Troop, 3/4 Cav, which had just closed into the TAY NINH TOSB, and ordered them into the center of the city to press the attack while there was still daylight. This troop arrived into position just before night fall and engaged an enemy force moving from the south toward the center of the city. After a brief but violent fire fight the enemy broke contact and disappeared. Consequently I then ordered this troop to hold this troop to hold an all around defensive position in the center of the city and prevent any movement of the enemy either northward or southward. At dawn, another combined US-SVN operation was mounted with the ARVN and RF forces to advance southward from the center of the city toward the 1st Bde blocking positions in the south. However, when the ARVN-RF forces made their attack it was discovered that the enemy had exfiltrated the city.

The rapid and aggressive armored attacks of the 1st Bde units had defeated the enemy's attempt to hold TAY NINH City for 3 days (as learned from captured documents and POW interrogation) and this defeat of the enemy was accomplished without any destruction of property in the city. Unfortunately one Buddhist Monk was killed and several Monks were wounded when the VC herded some 200 Buddhist Monks in front of their attacking elements during one part of the battle. During this action I had all US units cease firing to prevent killing the Monks, and although the enemy gained a temporary advantage, the cease fire allowed the Monks safe passage through US lines.

(e) 1st Bde Mech Inf RIP against elements of 5 VC Div (18 Aug 68)

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On 18 Aug 68, the 1/5 Inf (M) consisting of two (2) mechanized infantry companies were conducting a mounted daylight RIF across country in the area just west of the BEN CUI Rubber Plantation (see No. (5) of Map - Tab B Incl #3). During this RIF they contacted elements of one enemy anti-aircraft battalion and one enemy infantry battalion entrenched on the edge of the forests in the area. A six hour fire fight ensued until the enemy broke contact. The enemy suffered 52 KIA (body count) and many enemy weapons were captured including three (3) 12.7 anti-aircraft machine guns.

I desired to reinforce this contact so as to surround and destroy these two (2) enemy battalions. However, no reinforcements were available from 1st Bde resources because all reserves were committed in the Battle for TAY NINH City which had first priority.

Reinforcements from the 25th Inf Div were requested by 1st Bde but were denied because it was still believed by higher headquarters that the objectives of these enemy attacks were designed to draw US and SVN forces away from the defense of Saigon.

## (f) 1st Bde Armored TF attack against 275 VC Regt (19 Aug 68):

At approximately noon on 19 Aug 68, "A" Troop and the "Recon Plate" of the 3/4 Cav were ambushed along Route 26 (see No. (6) of Map Tab B of Incl 3) as they were clearing the alternate MSR (alternate MSR was CU CHI to TAY NINH using Route 26 from south to north).

I immediately took OPCON of these two units of the 3/4 Cav and reinforced them with two (2) mechanized infantry companies of the 4/23 Inf (M) and ordered them to attack and destroy the enemy ambush astride Route 26.

This TF attacked all day employing their armor (tanks and APCs) along the road using direct fire of the tank guns and machine gun fire to support the ground infantry assaults on the flanks to roll up the enemy ambush.

Unfortunately the rubber trees which had been cut down approximately 50 meters on each side of the Rubber Plantation prevented the armor from being employed into the rubber plantation.

After approximately six hours of ground attack supported by artillery, air strikes and helicopter fire teams, the Task Force advanced approximately 600 meters against a very strong and determined enemy force of at least two battalions of the 275th VC Regt. The enemy fought from one covered delaying position to another utilizing the cover

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afforded from foxholes and cut down rubber trees. The enemy suffered 42 KIA (body count) and over 30 possible enemy KIA while US had 3 KIA and 22 WIA.

As night approached the enemy broke contact and I ordered the Task Force into RAWLINS III FSB. This move was made in order to provide combat maneuver forces to defend this FSB, since all other forces of the 1st Bde were committed in battles elsewhere and I believed that the enemy broke contact with the TF in order to mass his troops to assault the FSB that night. Also, a resupply of ammunition and fuel was necessary for this TF for it to continue possible defense/offensive operations that night.

## (g) 1st Bde Mech RIF against elements of 5th VC Div (19 Aug 68)

Again on 19 Aug 68, two companies of the 1/5 Inf (M) were conducting a daylight cross-country RIF in the same general area that they had conducted the successful RIF the previous day (see No. 7 on Map Tab B to Incl 3). During this RIF the two mech companies again contacted one enemy anti-aircraft battalion and approximately two enemy infantry battalions entrenched on the edges of the forests of the area. However, this time the enemy did not attempt to avoid contact, but rather aggressively attempted to infiltrate forces around the advancing mech Inf companies to separate and cut off small elements of the US units. The enemy moving his forces in the concealment of the forests and attacking from the edges of the forest with intense volume of RPG 2 and RPG 7 anti-tank rocket fire managed to cut off one APC which was set afire.

The 1/5 Inf (M) units were ordered to mass their forces and fix the enemy in position with 50 cal MG fire while heavy air strikes and artillery fire were brought down on the enemy in the forests, before attempting to close with the enemy and assault his entrenched positions on the edges of the forest. After a 6 hour fire fight with the enemy and numerous mounted US assaults against a very large enemy force (approximately 600-800 enemy), the enemy withdrew from contact as darkness was falling. The enemy left 46 KIA (body count) while US losses were 2 KIA and 24 WIA.

However, the Bn CO of the 1/5 Inf (M) and I believed that this large enemy force was still in the general area of the BEN CUI Rubber plantation and this enemy would probably attempt to ambush any force attempting to move east or west on Route 239. Consequently, I ordered that one of his companies move immediately (using the remaining daylight) to their DAU TIENG TOSB to provide the combat maneuver force for defense of this US base at night. This move was accomplished without incident.

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The other mech company was ordered to join with the Recon Plt of the 3/4 Cav located at Check Point Tango (CP "T") and as a Task Force move west to east along Route 239 to DAU TIENG TOSB. This operation was ordered to put the Recon Plt in the DAU TIENG TOSB that night, because it could not safely defend itself at CP "T" from the large enemy forces operating to the north and east of its position. This Recon Plt of the 3/4 Cav was not familiar with the route to DAU TIENG and it was deemed prudent by me to have it combined with the mech company of the 1/5 Inf to lead it to DAU TIENG. Also this combined force of tanks and APCs would be sufficiently strong to defend itself against an enemy ambush along the route of march.

As darkness approached, this Task Force under the command of the mechanized infantry company commander began its mounted movement east along route 239, when it came under heavy anti-tank rocket and small arms fire from enemy concealed positions in the forests and rubber plantation on both sides of the road to DAU TIENG.

For approximately 3 hours the Bn CO of the 1/5 Inf (M) and myself directed flare ships, gun ships, artillery and air strikes in support of this Task Force against a strong and determined enemy force attempting to destroy this US force.

The Task Force employed all its organic weapons (90mm tank guns firing cannister and HE, 50 cal and M-60 machine guns, and small arms) in direct fire against the enemy on both sides of the road. The 3 tanks of the Task Force (one leading and two at the rear of the column) employed their searchlights to put illumination on the enemy on both sides of the road, which aided the placing of effective direct fire on the enemy.

Despite all of these friendly fires, the enemy was successful in knocking out two APCs at the head of the column which blocked the column for approximately 1/2 hour before the lead tank could maneuver around and push their two APCs off the road.

During this period of non-movement of the column the enemy launched very heavy ground and anti-tank rocket attacks against the two tanks at the rear of the column and were successful in knocking them out.

The column started moving again and made its way safely to DAU TIENG TOSB without further losses.

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The Task Force inflicted 87 enemy KIA (body count) and over 100 possible enemy KIA during this three hour fight. Friendly casualties were 6 KIA and approximately 38 WIA.

That evening at 1st Bde Hqs, my staff and I agreed that the recent heavy contacts with the enemy indicated that the major part of both the 5th VC and 9th VC Divisions were operating aggressively in the 1st Bde TAOR; that 1st Bde combat power was sufficient for defensive operations, but was not sufficient to provide the capability for offensive operations designed to surround and destroy these enemy infantry regiments. Therefore, I requested that Division assign at least one (1) additional infantry battalion to provide the flexibility and combat power to destroy an attacking enemy regiment. However, Division stated that no reinforcements would be made available at this time.

## (h) 1st Bde Operations for 20 Aug 68:

On 20 Aug 68, the enemy attempted to block the MSR in the 1st Bde TAOR by destroying by demolitions three key bridges on Routes 22, 26 and 239.

The TF 4/23 attacked small elements of the 275 VC Regt blocking Route 26 and with the help of 16 air strikes and AVLB bridging equipment advanced 2 kilometers down route #26. The enemy broke contact at approximately 1700 hours.

The TF 2/34 Armor conducted combined operations with ARVN and RF/PF forces against enemy local forces in the area between TAY NINH City and the Big Rubber with no enemy contact.

At a planning staff conference at 1st Bde Headquarters that night it was again agreed by my staff and I that the 1st Bde's combat power was sufficient to defend the seven (7) US bases in the TAOR, but was not sufficient to surround and destroy the enemy infantry regiments aggressively operating north and west of TAY NINH TOSB, along route 26, and the area around the BEN CUI Rubber Plantation. 1st Bde would continue to conduct daylight RIFs against these enemy regiments as "spoiling attacks" to keep them from getting set for a major coordinated attack against the US bases in the TAOR.

That night I requested by phone to Maj Gen Williamson that the 1st Bde be reinforced by a minimum of one (1) rifle infantry battalion to provide sufficient combat maneuver forces to attempt to surround and destroy at least one of these enemy infantry regiments. Maj Gen Williamson informed me that higher headquarters believed that these enemy attacks in the 1st Bde TAOR were designed to draw troops away from the defense of Saigon and consequently my request for reinforcements was denied. Nevertheless, I submitted by teletype a formal request for reinforcements, but no official response was given by the Hqs, 25th Inf Div.

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## (i) 1st Bde Defensive/Offensive Operation of TAY NINH TOSB (21 Aug 68):

At 0100 hours, 21 Aug 68, approximately two (2) VC infantry battalions believed to be organic to the 271 and 272 VC Regiments were intercepted by a reinforced dug-in platoon ambush from "A" Co, 2/27 Inf (see No. 8, Map of Tab B, Incl #3).

The enemy attack objective was TAY NINH TOSB which was the most important US base in the 1st Bde TAOR. The three dug-in reinforced platoons of "A" Co were astride the enemy's route of attack. The enemy attempted to break through this outer defensive ring of TAY NINH TOSB by concentrating his ground attack against the center platoon position of "A" Co.

Every weapon capable of firing in support of this platoon was employed by the 1st Bde during the 5 hour defense of this friendly position. Artillery from three of 1st Bde's fire support bases pounded the enemy forces along their route of advance; and Army gun ships and USAF fighter bombers raked the enemy concentrations also; and the two other platoons of "A" Company fired in mutual support on the flanks of the heavily attacked platoon.

At dawn, ground reinforcements were sent to the battle area as well as Army gun ships to destroy any pockets of enemy resistance remaining.

Also at first light, two infantry companies of the 2/27 Inf were airmobiled 5 kilometers NW of the battle area to attempt to trap the retreating enemy forces.

The results of this battle were 157 enemy KIA (body count) and 2 POWs while US casualties were 5 KIA and 8 WIA. Also the acting platoon leader was a Sergeant E-5 Lambers whose heroism during this action has resulted in a recommendation of a DSC award.

Again this day, a formal request for reinforcements for the 1st Bde was sent to Division.

## (j) 1st Bde Armored Operations against the 33 VC and 275 VC Regiments (21 Aug 68):

### (1) Operations against 275 VC Regt:

For the third day a 1st Bde Task Force consisting of two mechanized companies of the 4/23 Inf (M) and "A" Troop, 3/4 Cav contacted

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elements of the 275 VC Regt astride Route 26. The TF launched a ground attack against the enemy that morning supported by the direct fire from tanks and 50 cal MGs of the APCs, as well as indirect fire from artillery and Army helicopter fire teams. This fighting continued to almost darkness when the enemy broke contact.

This time the Task Force was reinforced just before dark with an ARVN Ranger Bn and I ordered this combined force to hold the most advanced defensible position on Route 26. However, I also ordered that one of two mech inf companies of the Task Force be detached and sent to RAWLINS III FSB to provide combat maneuver forces for its nighttime defense. This turned out to be a timely move because elements of the 275 VC Regt attacked RAWLINS III FSB late that night.

## (2) Operations against 33 VC Regt:

Late on the morning of 21 Aug 68, one mechanized company of the 1/5 Inf (M) and the Combined Reconnaissance and Intelligence Platoon (CRIP) of the 1/5 Inf (M) were conducting a reconnaissance in force on parallel axes on the BEN CUI Rubber Plantation. The mechanized company many with two platoons up and on in reserve contacted what appeared to be two battalions of the 33 VC Regt. A one hour fire fight ensued in which wave after wave of the enemy assaulted the company. The leading six armed personnel carriers were assaulted by hundreds of enemy VC troops firing RPG 2 and 7 rockets point blank at the APCs and the ground infantry, resulting in six APCs being set afire and the leading friendly ground infantry being overwhelmed by the attacking enemy infantry.

Despite the company's use of fire of all its organic small arms and 50 Cal MGs, and the resulting enemy losses of 182 (body count) the enemy continued to launch waves of assaults against the company.

All the officers and subordinate leaders of the leading two platoons including the company commander of the mech company were killed in this one hour engagement. Only one officer, a 2LT, who was the platoon leader of the reserve platoon, was not killed. He decided to withdraw from contact before the rest of the company was overwhelmed and destroyed by the large enemy force assaulting his company.

When I arrived on the scene of the contact in my C and C helicopter, the mech company had broken contact with the enemy and was entering the DAU TIENG Tactical Operational Base approximately 5 kilometers from the scene of the action. When I learned what had happened,

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I ordered the Bn CO 1/5 Inf (M) to constitute a counter-attacking force and move immediately to a position along the east side of the BEN CUI Rubber Plantation; and be prepared to launch a counter-attack with two companies of the 2/27 Inf to be airmobiled from their RIF area in the forests northwest of TAY NINH TOSB. The 1/5 Inf (M) sent immediately a reinforced mech inf company to a position on the eastern edge of the BEN CUI Rubber Plantation as I had ordered. In the meantime the Bn CO and I directed artillery, Army gun ships and air strikes on the enemy in the BEN CUI Rubber Plantation.

The reinforcement of approximately 200 men from the 2/27 Inf was accomplished, but it took several hours because of the fact that the 2/27 Inf elements had to march out of the forest to pick-up zones; and also with only one airmobile company I had to effect four sorties with a turn around time of 50 minutes for each sortie. It was after 1700 hours before the reinforcement was finally completed and it was getting dark with the late afternoon showers impending. Both Bn commanders and I deemed it tactically unsound to launch a night attack with such small forces against the enemy in strength into the BEN CUI Rubber Plantation at night when the advantage was on the side of the enemy. Consequently, I decided to wait until dawn and launch a coordinated attack from both west and east and attempt to destroy the 33 VC Regt in between.

## (2) 1st Bde briefing of US and ARVN corps commanders

In the afternoon, I conducted a briefing on the situation in the 1st Bde TAOR for Lt Gen Kerwin, CG II Field Forces, Lt Gen Thri, CG III ARVN Corps and Maj Gen Williamson, CG 25th Inf Div. At this briefing I again pointed out that the 1st Bde lacked sufficient combat power to surround and destroy the enemy regiments attacking in the 1st Bde TAOR. Also, I stated that in my judgement the enemy had launched his "Third Offensive" against the 25th Inf Div and was attempting to attack and destroy one or more US bases in the 1st Bde TAOR.

Further, I stated that my intelligence estimate also reveals that the enemy is attempting to keep open at this time his main infiltration route, through the MICHELIN and BEN CUI Rubber Plantations, in order to move one or two divisions southward in preparation for an attack against Saigon in the near future.

I recommended that the 1st Bde be reinforced with a minimum of two artillery batteries of 105mm or 155mm and one infantry battalion. That these reinforcements together with one mech battalion of the 1st Bde be employed from Check Point Tango eastward along Route 239 thru the BEN CUI Rubber Plantation to interdict both day and night

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the enemy infiltration route thru this area. At the same time the 1st Bde's other mech battalion at DAU TIENG would interdict the enemy infiltration route thru the MICHELIN Rubber Plantation. Further that another Fire Support Base consisting of two (2) artillery batteries (SCOFIELD FSB) be positioned immediately on Route 239 to support 1st Bde RIF operations against the enemy in that area.

Lt Gen Kerwin agreed with my estimate of the situation and stated that the 1st Bde should have been reinforced two days before.

Reinforcements for the 1st Bde were agreed upon by Lt Gen Kerwin and Lt Gen Thri to consist of the 51st ARVN Ranger Bn to be OPCON to the 1st Bde that afternoon upon arrival in the 1st Bde TAOR. Additionally one ARVN Airborne Brigade from Saigon would be committed also that night or the following day but its exact mission was not determined at that time.

Further Lt Gen Kerwin directed Maj Gen Williamson to put a Brigade Headquarters at DAU TIENG to direct tactical operations in the BEN CUI and MICHELIN Rubber Plantations to interdict the enemy infiltration route there. He stated that the 1st Bde TAOR was too large an area for one brigade to handle considering the large enemy forces operating there.

Maj Gen Williamson agreed to my tactical plan of a coordinated attack by the TF 4/23 attacking east along Route 239 and TF 2/27 attacking west thru the BEN CUI Rubber Plantation to destroy the 33 VC Regt in the BEN CUI area. He also agreed to the establishment of the SCOFIELD FSB on route 239 to support offensive operations in this area.

The 51st ARVN Ranger Bn arrived in the 1st Bde TAOR late in the afternoon, 22 Aug 68 and I had this Bn airmobiled into the TF 4/23 and OPCON to them.

(k) 1st Bde Defensive/Offensive Operations (23 Aug 68):

(1) Defense of BUELL II against 174 VC Regt

At approximately 0100 hours, 23 Aug 68 the 174 VC Regt attacked by fire and ground assault BUELL II FSB (see No. 12 Map - Tab B, Incl #3). The enemy attack was almost an exact copy of the first attack by the 273 VC Regt, except the enemy employed twice the amount of mortar, and RPG 2 and 7 rocket fire. After three hours of enemy fire and assault, the enemy ceased his attacks without having breached the perimeter of BUELL II FSB.

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The 1st Bde forces in BUELL II poured out a deadly sustained fire of 105mm and 155mm "Beehive" and "Firecracker," 90mm tank gun cannister and small arms which mowed down the enemy ground assault 100 meters from the perimeter of the defensive position. The enemy suffered 92 KIA (body count) while the US casualties were 22 WIA.

## (2) Defense of RAWLINS III FSB against the 275 VC Regt:

At approximately 0100 hours, 23 Aug 68, elements of the 275 VC Regt launched an attack by fire and ground assault against RAWLINS III FSB. After three hours this enemy attack was repulsed by the fires of 1st Bde forces in RAWLINS III FSB. The enemy suffered 38 KIA (body count) and the US casualties were 1 KIA and approximately 22 WIA.

## (3) 1st Bde coordinated attack against the 33 VC Regt:

At dawn, 23 Aug 68, TF 4/23 reinforced by the 51st ARVN Ranger Bn attacked south along Route 26 and then east along Route 239 (see No. 13 Map - Tab B Incl #3). At the same time TF 2/27 reinforced by 1/5 Inf (M) attacked west thru the BEN CUI Rubber Plantation (see No. 14 Map - Tab B Incl #3).

TF 2/27 made contact with an enemy force in the BEN CUI Rubber Plantation consisting of approximately one company apparently fighting a delaying action.

TF 4/23 made no contact with the enemy and moved rapidly to secure the area for establishment of SCOFIELD FSB. Then an AVLB was brought up to allow the armor to cross the blown bridge site on Route 239. By noon one battery of 105mm was implaced and ready to fire from SCOFIELD FSB.

The armored column moved rapidly across the AVLB bridge site and seized the air field just west of the BEN CUI Rubber Plantation and then the 51st ARVN Ranger Bn was airmobiled into this airhead.

The TF 2/27 broke thru the enemy delaying force and linked up with the TF 4/23 at the airhead. The 33 VC Regt had apparently moved south to avoid being trapped by the converging forces on them. The TF 2/27 had killed 10 of the enemy delaying force (body count).

The 33 VC Regt block of Route 239 had been broken. For the first time in 3 days the entire MSR in 1st Bde TAOR was clear and the first convoy rolled from TAY NINH TOSB to DAU TIENG TOSB that afternoon.

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At 1930 hours the area east of NS grid line 39 was passed to the 2d Bde, 25th Inf. Also the 2/27 Inf Bn, 1/5 Inf (M), "A" Troop, 3/4 Cav, Recon Flt 3/4, and the 51st Ranger Bn were placed OPCON to the 2d Bde.

## (1) 1st Bde attack against enemy ambush (25 Aug 68)

On 24 Aug 68, Maj Gen Williamson ordered that all of the 2/34 Armor in the 1st Bde TAOR would be OPCON to the 25th Inf Div and would move to CU CHI at 0600 hours 25 Aug 68. He stated that 1st Bde would still be held responsible for all of its missions except that the "clear and secure the MST mission" would have a low priority and would be accomplished only as the forces were available and the situation allowed.

Thus the combat maneuver forces available to the 1st Bde consisted of the 4/23 Inf (M) and two rifle companies of the 3/22 Inf. In my judgement these forces were barely sufficient to defend the six (6) US bases in the 1st Bde TAOR. Further, it did not provide sufficient combat forces to react quickly to an enemy attack of even battalion size; and it reduced the forces "to clear and secure the MSR" to a level that would not allow for adequate reconnaissance in force along the MSR to provide security for the division convoys each day.

I dispatched a teletype message to Div Hqs on the 24th of August pointing out the above estimate of the situation and made my request for one infantry battalion to be assigned to the 1st Bde to adequately perform its assigned missions. However, no additional troops were assigned.

At 1145 hours, on 25 August 68, a 25th Inf Div convoy of approximately 95 ammunition and fuel vehicles with their own security was ambushed as they moved north from CU CHI to TAY NINH. The enemy ambush was on both sides of Route 22 located some 4 kilometers north of GO DAU HA, which was the extreme southern part of the 1st Bde TAOR (see No. 15, Map - Tab "B" Incl 3).

The ambush consisted of a reinforced enemy VC battalion of 5 companies in position along 2500 meters on both sides of the road; four enemy companies were located in a trench on the east side of the road along the edge of the Little Rubber Plantation, and one company was located on the west side of the road in a village along the 2500 meters of the road just opposite the Little Rubber Plantation.

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Only the last 15 vehicles of the convoy were ambushed resulting in one ammo vehicle in the northern part of the ambush being destroyed and set afire while the southern two vehicles (a jeep and a 2 1/2 ton truck) were destroyed on the southern end. In between were 12 prime movers with ammunition trailers loaded with 105mm and 155mm artillery ammo, whose drivers were missing and whose prime movers were not operational because the tires were flat from small arms punctures and the motors were inoperative because of enemy small arms action.

I learned of the ambush at approximately 1200 hours from my brigade TOC which received the information from my security forces C Co, 4/23 Mech which were speeding to the scene of the ambush to destroy the enemy and secure the elements of the convoy involved in the ambush.

Upon arrival at the scene of the ambush, I saw that one platoon of the Co Co, 4/23 Inf (which consisted of two armored personnel carriers and 10 men under a 2LT) was heavily engaged with a large enemy force in the southern part of the ambush in the Little Rubber Plantation. The remainder of C Co, 4/23 was engaged with the enemy at the northern end of the ambush. Heavy enemy fire was being received from the Little Rubber Plantation and the village in the north.

Lacking any stand-by reaction forces, I immediately requested of division that one troop of the 3/4 Cav which under division control move from CU CHI to the scene of the action; and also from 1st Bde resources that one company of the 3/22 Inf which was conducting a RIF 5 kilometers north of BUELL II Fire Support Base, be assembled and airmobiled into the northern end of the enemy ambush site as quickly as possible to reinforce C Co, 4/23 Inf.

Further, a timely suggestion by the Div Arty Cmdr, Col Sommers, to move 155mm battery from TRANG BANG to GO DAU HA to give fire support to 1st Bde forces was quickly agreed upon by Col Sommers and myself and within 2 hours 155mm battery was firing in direct support of the action from GO DAU HA.

In the meantime, the platoon of C Co, 4/23 Inf at the southern end of the ambush was heavily engaged and about to be overrun so I directed aerial scout teams to be diverted from recon missions in the TAY NINH area to the southern part of the ambush to support by fire the platoon in trouble there. In addition my C and C helicopter made six passes over the enemy until my crew chief was wounded from AK-47 fire coming from the enemy in the Little Rubber and the village.

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By this time B Troop, 3/4 Cav arrived from the south and I told them the situation and ordered them to attack the enemy ambush in the south and come to the aid of the platoon of C Co, 4/23 Inf under heavy attack there.

B Troop, 3/4 Cav immediately went into the attack from route column along the road to envelope the enemy on the southern end of the ambush. The enemy reacted violently with RPG 2 and RPG 7 rocket fire and small arms against the B Troop attack, and in the next 30 minutes of heavy fighting the Co Cmdr of B Troop and 4 others were killed and approximately 10 wounded, but over 30 enemy were killed in this fierce fight.

At this time I had to leave my station over the battlefield and return to TAY NINH to refuel. Before leaving, I put Lt Col Neilson, Bn CO of the 4/23 Inf (M) as Task Force commander of all the troops in this battle. He had just arrived on the scene of the battle with the airmobile company carrying C Company, 3/22 Inf into the northern end of the ambush site to reinforce the two platoons of C Co, 4/23 Inf (M) who were fighting the enemy there.

While my C and C helicopter was refueling at the TAY NINH Tactical Operation Base, I went to my brigade TOC where I learned that the G-3 Section of the 25th Inf Div desired to know if I could employ an infantry battalion of the 506th Inf to trap the enemy in the Little Rubber. I readily agreed that such a reinforcement could be profitably employed to trap the enemy in the Little Rubber by airmobile means. I agreed to pick out landing zones and to accept OPCON of this battalion when it arrived in my TAOR.

As part of the agreement, I also agreed to relieve the airmobile company which was assigned to the 1st Bde and give it back to the 25th Inf Div to make it available for the reinforcing battalion airlift. However, I heard nothing more regarding this proposed reinforcement for the rest of the battle in the Little Rubber.

While at the 1st Bde CP I met Cpt Phillips who was CO of C Co, 4/23 Inf (M). He told me he had been on a mission for his battalion and he desired to join his company which was engaged with the enemy in the Little Rubber.

I sped back to the Little Rubber in my C and C helicopter with Cpt Phillips aboard. Upon arrival at the Little Rubber I learned from LTC Nielson that he had committed C Co, 3/22 Inf and his own C Co (-), 4/23 Inf as team in an attack from north to south thru the enemy occupied village to destroy the enemy there.

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I also contacted by radio Lt Hedley who was acting CO of B Troop, 3/4 Cav which was on the southern end of the Little Rubber ambush site. He told me that he had broken the enemy resistance there and that the enemy was retreating north and northeast thru the Little Rubber. He also stated that one of his platoons was badly shot up with 5 KIA and over 10 WIA.

I ordered him to leave the shot-up platoon with the platoon from C Co, 4/23 Inf (M) and that this team would have the mission of acting as block to the enemy to prevent him from moving forces southward out of the Little Rubber and also to prevent enemy movement from the enemy held village eastward across the road and into the Little Rubber or southward; also this team was to protect the 12 knocked-out cargo vehicles along the road in the ambush site area. Finally, I told him that I was landing nearby with my C and C helicopter to drop off Cpt Phillips who would command this team of a two platoon blocking force.

Despite heavy ground fire coming from the enemy held village, my C and C ship successfully landed momentarily in time to drop Cpt Phillips safely into his combined force area.

I then ordered Lt Hedley, acting CO of B Troop, 3/4 Cav to pursue the enemy through the Little Rubber as part of the proposed plan from C-3 25th Inf Div to destroy the enemy in the Little Rubber by airmobiling a battalion of the 506th Inf into the northern part of the Little Rubber.

After getting B Troop (-), 3/4 Cav moving at my direction into the Little Rubber, I received a radio call from Maj Gen Williamson who ordered me to move all those knocked-out vehicles from the ambush site to TAY NINH. I explained to Maj Gen Williamson that the drivers of those vehicles were MIA and that the prime movers were all shot up and that I would need to employ wreckers to move those ambushed vehicles; and most importantly I must first eliminate the enemy forces in the Little Rubber and the enemy held village. Maj Gen Williamson kept insisting on the radio that I move those vehicles first and I assured him that I would do my best to move those vehicles as he desired. I then ordered Lt Col Neilson on the ground to move his forces on to the road to secure those vehicles and start to evacuate them to TAY NINH.

His forces immediately came into heavy enemy contact with an enemy company located around a pagoda temple located on the north end of the Little Rubber just to the east of Highway 22. This enemy company was the main enemy element which was holding the northern end of the ambush.

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I then directed by air, the movement of B Troop (-), 3/4 Cav thru the Little Rubber to a position just behind the enemy held pagoda temple grounds and in 15 minutes the enemy position was broken by the attacking elements of the C Co, 3/22 Inf and C Co (-), 4/23 which combined force was lead by Cpt Hansard (CO of C Co, 3/22d) attacking the enemy from the west of B Troop (-), 3/4 Cav attacking the enemy from the east. The surviving enemy from the pagoda temple area fled southward 300 meters thru the Little Rubber and joined the main enemy forces located there.

Again I directed Lt Col Neilson to get those convoy vehicles evacuated and told him to take charge of the forces involved while I refueled back at TAY NINH.

I refueled and sped back to the scene of the action to find that the enemy was still in strength in the center of the Little Rubber with some 300 VC in a trench which ran perpendicular to Route 22. The trench was approximately 300 meters long and the enemy was resisting fiercely from this trench and south along Route 22. Lt Col Neilson reported that he was unable to move any of the convoy vehicles, because of the strong enemy forces still holding the ambush site. He asked for permission to go to TAY NINH and refuel and I allowed him to do so.

B Troop was advancing southward thru the Little Rubber against the enemy in the trench while the team of C Co, 3/22 and C Co (-), 4/23 were moving southward also along the west side of Route 22 (in the enemy held village side of the road).

I contacted the B Troop commander (1LT Hedley) by radio and asked what the situation was and he told me that he was heavily engaged with some 300 VC in a trench some 100 meters to his front; further that the enemy was using RPG 2 and 7 against his force and the enemy small arms fire was intense. He further stated that he was low on ammunition and also that his vehicles were low on fuel.

I ordered him to assault the enemy held trench with fire and movement. He did so and reported back in 10 minutes that the enemy resistance was very strong and he was unable to move forward without more infantry.

I then ordered Cpt Hansard (CO, C Co, 3/22) to move his infantry to join B Troop in an assault of the enemy held trench. He stated that he was almost out of ammunition. I ordered him to redistribute his ammunition and quickly join forces with B Troop (-) and make this assault and destroy the enemy in the trench. Further, that he, Cpt Hansard, was the commander of this combined force on the ground.

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Cpt Hansard redistributed his ammunition among his company but had to leave one of his platoons in the village because they were out of ammunition. With the remainder of his company he joined B Troop and together they assaulted the enemy held trench. After 20 minutes of intense fighting, both company commanders reported to me that the enemy was in great strength in the trench to their front and in positions on their flanks; and that the enemy fire power was too strong for them to close with and destroy the enemy. Further that the Cpt Hansard's infantry elements were almost out of ammunition, also the enemy was aggressively attempting to surround the Task Force using his superiority of numbers and fire power. Both requested permission to withdraw their forces from contact to regroup, resupply with ammunition and then attack again. Both stated also that it was almost dark and to stay in contact with this strong enemy force in the rubber forest, without sufficient ammunition (over 300 VC vs approx 100 US) would result in the enemy having a great tactical advantage of numbers and fire power as well as darkness to surround and destroy this Task Force.

I ordered the forces to disengage from the enemy and fight a withdrawal action moving northward and go into a defensive position on the road just north of the Little Rubber and be prepared to attack again as soon as ammunition resupply was accomplished.

The Task Force under command of Cpt Hansard skillfully effected this withdrawal just as a very heavy rain storm hit the area bringing total darkness and heavy rains which prevented evacuation of casualties and resupply of ammunition for over 4 hours.

At approximately 1830 hours just 30 minutes before leaving the scene of the action to refuel, I contacted Cpt Phillips who was in command of the team in the south (consisting of one platoon of C Co, 4/23 and the one hard hit platoon of B Troop, 3/4 Cav) and apprised him of the actions of Cpt Hansard's forces on the northern end of the Little Rubber. I then ordered him to form a tight defense perimeter in his area located off Route 22 just south of the Little Rubber, and to prevent the enemy from getting at those convoy vehicles on the road north of his position. He acknowledged my orders and stated that he only had a FRC-25 and that he had to move out fast to assemble his force and form a defensive perimeter; further that he had 5 US dead and some 15 US wounded and his team was almost out of ammunition. Further, I ordered him to keep a man on his radio and that I would resupply his force with small arms ammunition within an hour.

Fifteen minutes later I contacted an ammunition resupply helicopter and attempted to direct it to Cpt Phillips position but I could not contact him on the radio. Then I made several passes with my

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helicopter over his position to attempt to locate them. However, the rain storm was so severe by this time that all helicopters had to leave the area of contact because the visibility (darkness combined with heavy rains) became so poor and the ceiling so low that the helicopters could not fly under these weather conditions.

While all helicopters were grounded for some four hours I put Lt Col Neilson in charge of the ammunition resupply and evacuation of casualties for the northern team.

Again at approximately 2300 hours that night Maj Gen Williamson telephoned me at my Brigade Tactical Operation Center and ordered me to protect and secure all US property in the ambush site. I told Maj Gen Williamson that I would do my best to protect this US property and we would attempt evacuation of these vehicles that night if at all possible. I told him that I was having the northern team employ a searchlight tank to put illumination and fire on the road to protect the convoy vehicles in the enemy held ambush site.

It was approximately 0030 hours that I flew on over the area of contact and directed gun ships and air strikes into the Little Rubber. The enemy held village was not struck by artillery or air power to prevent destruction of the village and possible loss of Vietnamese lives. I also attempted again to contact by radio and by making passes with my helicopter to locate the southern force of two platoons under Cpt Phillips but with no success.

About 0100 the northern force detected what they thought were enemy climbing on the knocked-out trucks and trailers on the road in the ambush site. I directed gun ships against this supposed enemy firing only mini-guns to drive the enemy off and not damage the US property in the convoy.

I had Lt Col Neilson get on the ground with the Northern force to attempt to retrieve the convoy vehicles. However, he stated that it would take 12 wreckers to move the convoy and all the ground commanders believed the enemy was in the area in strength and that retrieval operations at night with enemy around would result in heavy casualties.

The weather clouded in again and at 0200 I had to cease air strikes and gun ships in the area and return to TAY NINH; however artillery was kept going pounding the Little Rubber, and the searchlight tank kept surveillance over the area.

Back at my brigade TOC I had Lt Col Neilson attempt by radio and telephone to contact Cpt Phillips and his forces. He told me at

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0300 hours approximately that he had contacted friendly elements at GO DAU HA that stated that Cpt Phillips' forces had moved to GO DAU HA to bring their dead and wounded there and to get resupplied with ammo and that they were moving back to their position on the southern end of the Little Rubber as I had ordered them to do before.

At 0330 Lt Col Neilson and I decided on a battle plan for the early dawn attack against the enemy in the Little Rubber and the enemy held village. At 0630 the northern forces started cautiously moving southward clearing the road and flanks as they moved southward.

At 0730 I contacted by radio the southern forces under Cpt Phillips and he was in position on the southern part of the Little Rubber forming a block to enemy movement southward. He confirmed to me that he had moved his forces to GO DAU HA that night to take care of the dead and wounded and get ammunition resupply.

By 1000 hours the entire ambush area had been swept clear and the evacuation of the convoy vehicles began. Some 5 of the 12 vehicles were combat losses but almost all of the trailers with artillery ammo were in good shape and brought out safely by wreckers. By 1500 hours the ambush area was clear of all salvageable vehicles and by 1800 hours that day all salvageable vehicles had closed TAY NINH TOSB without incident or accident. There were 104 enemy KIA (body count) and 126 possible enemy KIA while US losses were 12 KIA and approximately 38 WIA.

(m) 1st Bde Defense/Offense Operations against the 275 VC Regt attack of RAWLINS III FSB (27 Aug 68):

At 0930 hours, 27 Aug 68, approximately two (2) battalions of the 275 VC Regt attacked by fire and ground assault the 1st Bde forces in RAWLINS III FSB (see No. 16 of Map Tab B, Incl #3).

This second attack of RAWLINS III FSB was a much stronger attack than the first one in that much more mortar, RFG 2 and 7 fire was used by the enemy to support their close assault of the US base. Also the enemy made more determined ground assaults to breach the perimeter of RAWLINS III FSB as evidenced by the many dead on or near the defensive wire of the perimeter of the base.

The attack lasted for approximately 3 hours with the defenders employing direct fire of the 105mm battery using "Beehive and Firecracker" and the 50 cal MG fire of the APCs, as well as mortars and small arms. Artillery support fires were employed from TAY NINH TOSB and BUELL II FSB to pound the enemy attack positions around RAWLINS III FSB.

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At first light Army gun ship teams searched the area to attack and destroy retreating enemy. Ground troops from the 4/23 Inf (M) searched the areas around the base to capture or destroy enemy elements attempting to escape.

A search of the area revealed 58 enemy KIA (body count) and much enemy equipment and weapons were captured. The 1st Bde forces suffered only approximately 8 WIA.

## 4. Summary

### a. Results:

During the period 5-27 Aug 68 the 1st Bde successfully accomplished all missions assigned to it. The results were victory in battle in 14 engagements with a numerically superior enemy who was aggressively attacking to destroy US forces and bases in the 1st Bde TAOR. The successful defensive and offensive operations of the 1st Bde contributed significantly to the defeat of the VC "Third Offensive" launched on the night of 17-18 Aug 68 against the US bases and TAY NINH City in the 1st Bde TAOR. The enemy suffered over 1,200 KIA (body count) and US losses were approximately 85 KIA. However, subsequent intelligence has revealed that the enemy suffered over 1,500 KIA and over 2,000 WIA during this period of heavy contact (17-27 Aug 68) with the 1st Bde, 25th Inf Div (see Tab C, Incl 3).

### b. Professional Teamwork:

These victories were primarily the result of the professional teamwork among the combined arms (Infantry, Armor, Artillery, Combat Engineers, and Combat Signal) of the units of the 1st Bde ably supported by the combat service support units of the 25th Inf Div, 1st Signal Bde, 588 Engr Bn and units of the 1st Logistical Command stationed at TAY NINH and DAU TIENG TOSBs.

Further, the outstanding fire support rendered by the Air Force (FACs) fighter bombers, B-52 strikes and flare ships all of which contributed significantly to all of the victories of the 1st Bde.

The Army helicopter "Fire Teams" and "Scout Teams" provided outstanding close fire support and reconnaissance to all of the operations of the 1st Bde. The Army helicopters flew thousands of hours, many of which were at low altitudes and in bad weather against an aggressive enemy that employed small arms fire and anti-aircraft MG fire at every

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opportunity. Many Army helicopter crewmen were wounded but fortunately none were killed and no helicopters were lost.

Of significant honorable mention was the outstanding leadership and bravery demonstrated by the young E5 and E6 NCOs who successfully commanded more than 75% of the infantry and mechanized platoons of the units of the 1st Brigade during this period of heavy close combat with the enemy.

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