


ANNUAL SUPPLEMENT
HISTORY OF TROOP B, 7TH ARMORED SQUADRON
1ST AIR CAVALRY, 164TH AVIATION GROUP (COMBAT)
1ST AVIATION BRIGADE

1 January 1969 - 31 December 1969

Prepared By:

WO1 Bernard S Goldenzwoig
Unit Historical Officer

Approved By:


GARY P BERGERON
Major, Armor
Commanding

Vinh Long, Republic of Vietnam
APO 96357

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SOURCE: MIKE O'REILLY

UNIT OPERATIONS

For Troop B the events of 1968 were indeed a fine prelude to those occurring in 1969. During the latter year Troop B, 7th Armored Squadron, 1st Air Cavalry conducted and was involved in many operations ranging throughout the Mekong Delta which proved to have a considerably detrimental effect on enemy personnel, weapons, and logistical strength.

In this respect the month of January started with a bang. Operating out of Ca Mau in the U Minh Forest on New Year's Day, the troop destroyed several well-fortified bunkers, inserted troops, captured six prisoners of war, killed three Viet Cong, and captured 15 weapons. This action proved to be typical of things to come, for on the 6th, the troop killed 13 Viet Cong near Rach Gia and on the 13th picked up 16 POW's, 3 RPG launchers, ammunition, and 2 AK 47 assault rifles. However, on 20 January, Troop B had to pay the price of success for on that date one LOH was shot up, one Cobra gunship developed engine trouble, two slicks were shot down, one other slick received numerous hits and the pilot was wounded. This loss did not affect the determination of the troop to accomplish its mission and on 25 January Troop B inserted several sorties of ground troops who dug up two fresh graves and subsequently discovered a large ammunition cache containing 54 cases of B-40 rockets and 21 cases of 82mm mortar rounds. This was a fitting end to a month which saw the Dutchmasters credited with 120 Viet Cong killed by air. One hundred thirty-five structures and 119 sampans were also destroyed.

The month of February found the troop in support of the 44th Special Tactical Zone for the first two weeks and the 21st ARVN Division for the last two weeks. On the 4th the troop killed 10 Viet Cong and destroyed 18 hooches and sampans. The 7th was a little better with 14 VC killed by air and 9 enemy soldiers taken prisoner. The Dutchmasters hit the jackpot on the 11th. While operating from Cao Lanh, the scouts and gunships surprised several large groups of NVA soldiers travelling via sampans. Employing numerous air attacks, the cobras accounted for 37 KBAs and also destroyed 5 sampans in the process. Shifting to Rach Soi on the 23d and to Ca Mau on the 26th, the troop destroyed 24 mortar tubes and killed 16 VC respectively. All totaled, the Dutchmasters received credit for 126 structures and 81 sampans destroyed in addition to 140 enemy soldiers killed by air which turned out to be their highest kill total for 1969.

March found the troop under the able command of Major William Gillette, popularly known as "The Blade". Operating in support of the 9th ARVN Division for much of the month, a good portion of the troop's energy was devoted to disrupting the enemy's transportation systems. On the first day of the month Dutchmaster elements destroyed 35 sampans, and one large sampan factory located inside a camouflaged hooch. On the 6th and 10th, the troop killed 12 VC and destroyed numerous sampans in the process. The 13th was a bad day for the troop. Mr Chase, a scout pilot, experienced engine failure in his LOH and while exiting his aircraft after making a successful autorotation, he was decapitated by a main rotor blade.

This was our first fatality incurred during 1969. The 27th was somewhat better with 33 sampans and 5 hootches being destroyed. March's total was 34 Viet Cong killed 104 structures and 189 sampans destroyed.

During the month of April, the troop saw heavy contact on several occasions and on the 5th enjoyed one of its most successful days of the year. The action began when a cavalry unit of the 7th ARVN Division, which Bravo Troop was supporting, reported a company of Viet Cong marching toward the Vietnam-Cambodia border. Upon being discovered, enemy forces on both sides of the border opened fire. Although the Dutchmaster Cobras sustained multiple hits, they succeeded in killing 40 Viet Cong and North Vietnamese soldiers. The deadly accurate fire provided by the gunships enabled the ground elements to sweep toward the border near Cai Cai where they discovered one of the largest weapons caches ever found in the Mekong Delta. Consisting of 750 rifles and carbines, over 100 Chinese Communist 9mm pistols, 200 sks carbines, numerous AK 47 assault rifles, and .30 and .50 caliber machine guns, the cache was estimated to weigh 150 tons, enough to supply a VC or NVA division for three months. Although B Troop spent the remainder of the day removing equipment, the cache was so large that over 50 tons had to be destroyed in place. The 10th and 12th proved to be almost as lucrative with 57 enemy soldiers slain and several mortars and machine guns plus ammunition captured.

On the 13th, also near Cai Cai, the troop captured two more heavy machine guns, one light machine gun, 5 rifles, 3 U.S. BAR's, 27 B-40 rockets, 15 mortar rounds, 1 57MM recoilless rifle, 75 kilos of tetrachloric acid, and 65 booby traps, another substantial haul. The 29th found the troop inflicting damage upon the enemy's medical supply system, for ground troops inserted by Dutchmaster slicks captured 5 sampans full of medicine in addition to 4 ammunition boxes stuffed with important documents. This was a fine finale to a very productive month and certainly demonstrated the benefits to be reaped through proper utilization of an air cavalry type unit.

May and June once again found B Troop in support of the 44th STZ. Throughout this time frame most of the troop's duties consisted of visual reconnaissance and resupply missions with a few aerial convoy escort missions conducted on behalf of Powder Valley, a U.S. Infantry unit stationed at Chi Lang. Although the action slowed down somewhat during this period, excitement ran high, especially during the afternoons of 12 and 18 May when the VC and NVA launched a ground and mortar attack against the Chi Lang Airstrip. Fortunately, these attacks were repulsed, but they served as a reminder of the omnipresence of the enemy and caused the men of B Troop to maintain their high state of alertness. This vigilance paid off on 19 June when the aero scout platoon located VC fighting positions in the Nha Trang area west of Chi Lang. After the Cobras completed their work, 40 enemy bodies were found in spider holes in the tall grass surrounding them. This was the first of several good days in that area.

For B Troop July came in with a rush of activity. While conducting a VR of the Nha Trang area on the 4th, the scouts surprised a large transient group of VC and NVA regulars.

After raking the targets, the scouts called upon the cobras who systematically began to celebrate Independence Day with plenty of fireworks at the enemy's expense. By the day's end 90 enemy soldiers lay dead, the highest number killed by the Dutchmaster troop in one day during 1969. On the 16th, the troop staged out of Vi Tanh. Ground troops were inserted to check out 96 sampans loaded with equipment, 56 of them were subsequently destroyed. As of 1830 on 24 July, B Troop began to pull night missions at Chi Lang and Moc Hoa. Most of the missions, although hampered by bad weather, were routine search and destroy operations. No insertions or extractions were made. In order to cover both areas, the troop was split into "A" and "B" teams, each team being comprised of two LOH's, two Cobras, one Command and Control ship, and a flare ship. "A" team staged out of Moc Hoa and "B" team flew out of Chi Lang. Despite the fact that the purpose of these night flights was harassment and interdiction B Troop had only moderate success with one exception. On the 29th they received machine gun fire from caves dug into the summit of Mt. Nui Coto and returned the fire in spades, killing 40 Viet Cong. So ended the night missions at Chi Lang and with their termination B Troop breathed a collective sigh of relief.

August was a fairly routine month for Dutchmaster. While the number of Viet Cong killed by air declined, the number of sampans destroyed surged upward to 194, the highest monthly total for 1969 in that category.

September saw the unit operating out of such widely dispersed areas as Ben Tre, Vi Tanh, Rach Gia, and Chi Lang while supporting, at various times, the 9th ARVN Division, the 21st ARVN Division, and the 44th Special Tactical Zone respectively. While conducting a visual reconnaissance near Chi Lang, the LOH's received heavy automatic weapons fire and managed to kill 5 VC. Then the Cobras rolled in and they completely raked the area with devastating rocket, 40mm., and minigun fire. The "Snakes" were subsequently credited with 15 possible KBA's plus 1 .30 caliber and 2 .50 caliber machine guns destroyed. On the 24th the scouts killed 4 more Viet Cong at Vi Tanh, increasing the total number of kills for the month to 91. On the 28th, B Troop underwent another change of command with Major Gillette transferring control of the unit to Major Gary P. Bergeron.

During October B Troop flew most of its missions out of Ben Tri, Dong Tam, and Tra Vinh and production wise, it was an excellent month. From the 3rd through the 14th 31 VC and NVA were killed, mostly at Tra Vinh and on the 15th 17 more met their destiny under the hail of lead spewing from the deadly guns of Dutchmaster. Towards the end of the month B Troop participated in one of the most interesting and promising operations of the year. A joint US Army-Air Force effort, it was designed to knock out the enemy's winter offensive capability in the Chi Lang area. The targets consisted of 7 enormous cave complexes on Mountains Nui Gia, Nui Cam, and Nui Coto. Basically, the scouts under the protection of the Cobras were to mark the cave entrances with red smoke whereupon Air Force F-4 Phantom fighter-bombers would launch radar guided Bullpex missiles from a range of 2 miles. The first attack resulted in a direct hit, however, because of the intense enemy antiaircraft fire being directed against them the scouts were unable to fly close enough to accurately assess the damage. Altogether only 3 out of the 7 caves were claimed to have been destroyed in this and subsequent attacks. During this mission the weather became a factor of considerable magnitude; fog was very prevalent and

visibility was often less than 2 miles. This factor precluded operations for 3 days. Although the mission did not meet the degree of success that was anticipated, the idea and planning was very sound, and it is known that the enemy suffered adverse effects from the strikes that were successful. During October B Troop accounted for 101 kills, 142 sampans, and 296 structures destroyed.

November was a month that will long be remembered by the Dutchmasters. On the 2nd, WO1 Stokkerman developed engine problems in his LOH and while enroute back to Vinh Long from Chi Land, his engine failed. Unfortunately, he crashed and since it was still dark, the wreckage plus the bodies of WO1 Stokkerman, his observer and crew chief were not found for another 2 hours. The 2nd was indeed a sad day for Bravo Troop. On the 7th and 9th the troop killed 11 VC and destroyed 39 structures and 22 sampans at Ca Mau and Rach Soi. The 11th was also a bad day. Staying out of Vi Tanh, all 5 slicks were struck by enemy fire as were 2 OH-6A LOH's. Fortunately only one person was seriously wounded. On the 12th the unit killed 7 VC and NVN and on the 16th, near Ca Mau in the heart of the U Minh Forest, 41 more enemy soldiers were permanently put out of commission. During November B Troop killed 87 VC by air, destroyed 214 structures and 108 sampans and flew 2549 hours, their highest monthly total for the year.

During December B Troop operated from Rach Soi, Vi Tanh, Ca Mau, and Vinh Long, and added 27 more KMs, 225 structures, and 80 more sampans to its list. As of 31 December, B Troop was officially credited with killing 879 Viet Cong and NVN by air, destroying 1622 structures and 1369 sampans, and flying 24,828 hours of combat time. Nineteen hundred and sixty-nine was certainly an outstanding year for B Troop, a year which the Dutchmasters can look back on with pride and a deep sense of accomplishment for its contribution to the loosening of the enemy's grip on the people living in the Mekong Delta region of the Republic of Vietnam.

APPENDIX I

TROOP OPERATIONS

WORLD WAR II

RESULTS

	<u>Sorties</u>	<u>Pax</u>	<u>Tons Cargo</u>	<u>Hours Flown</u>	<u>A/C% Availability</u>	<u>KBA</u>	<u>Struc</u>	<u>Sampans</u>
JAN	3270	4714	8	1672	74.2%	120	135	119
FEB	3215	3353	4	1881	73.3%	140	126	81
MAR	3651	4804	8	2203	72.1%	34	104	189
APR	4599	6650	28	2337	75.2%	105	91	170
MAY	3967	4708	13	2131	79.6%	24	86	68
JUN	3769	4086	9	1893	83.4%	42	12	82
JUL	4021	4803	6	2100	80.9%	99	52	77
AUG	4449	4429	5	1857	85.8%	18	157	194
SEP	3625	3302	10	1869	92.4%	91	116	64
OCT	3824	3911	20	2187	81.6%	101	298	142
NOV	4381	4325	17	2549	82.2%	171	214	108
DEC	2655	2523	7	2149	92.3%	11* 18 9*	9* 225 32*	1* 225 32*
TOTALS	45,426	51,608	135	24,828	81.0% (Av)	879 20*	1622 41*	1369 33*

* probable