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HEADQUARTERS
2D BRIGADE, 1ST CAVALRY DIVISION (AIR)
APO US FORCES 964901
199

AVCBB-C

16 March 1966

SUBJECT: Combat after action report.

TO: Commanding General
1st Air Cav Div
ATTN: G3
APO US Forces 96490

1. Name and type of Operation: "EAGLES CLAW", search and destroy.
2. Dates of Operation: 16 Feb - 27 Feb 1966.
3. Location: BINH DINH Province bounded by coord BR6060, BR6095, BR9060, BR9095.
4. Control or Command Headquarters: 2d Bde, 1st Air Cav Div.
5. Reporting Officer: Col William R Lynch
6. Task Organization:

<u>1/5 Cav</u>	<u>Bde Control</u>	
TACP	1/77 Arty	2d Plat B Co 8th Engr
<u>2/5 Cav</u>	C A TM #41	2d Plat 545 MP Co
TACP	Tm 13th Sig	10 RRU Tm
<u>2/12 Cav</u>	Weather Tm	IPW/CI Tm, 191 MI
TACP	2d Fwd Spt	Trp B 1/9 Cav OP CON
	TACP	

7. Supporting Forces:

a. During the Operation EAGLES CLAW the 1/77 Arty provided direct support arty to units of the 2d Bde. These fires were reinforced by 1/30 Arty (155) and 8" and 175mm gun Battalions positioned at PONY & DUCK. Extensive use was made of arty during the entire operation to prepare LZ's and to prepare Obj areas. Perhaps the most distinguishing characteristic of the entire operation was the almost exclusive use of arty to conduct H&I at night over the IRON TRIANGLE area. During the height of the campaign between 200-500 rds of all types were fired into the area each night.

b. TAC Air support was provided by the 2d Air Div. Extensive use of TAC air was used to prepare LZ with napalm, WP and frag bombs. Extensive use of AIR CAP was used through out the period to strike at pockets of enemy resistance. A total of 30 sorties were flown during the first 6 days of the operation. Almost one third of these sorties were used on LZ preparation. Also during the operation SAC provided a B52 strike on 21 Feb at 1600 on the IRON TRIANGLE. The attack was made by two flights of three A/C each. Target coverage was excellent.

c. The 227th AHB provided the necessary lift capability for the Bde to accomplish its assigned mission. The 228th HB provided the Bde with the capability to displace arty into inaccessible areas and to resupply foward units in bulk.

8. Intelligence:

a. The initial intelligence received for EAGLES CLAW was timely and in most cases accurate. Locations and identifications of enemy units were quized from a captured NVA Battalion Commander. As units of the brigade became heavily engaged

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in the IRON TRIANGLE area the intelligence picture continued to be kept current from captured prisoners, documents, and weapons. The information gained from VCS's normally confirmed estimates of enemy units engaged.

b. Intelligence from the captured battalion commander caused the initial movement of troops into the area. The presence of many heavy weapons, communications complexes and the intensity of fighting in the area resulted in the deployment of three bns and culminated in a B52 strike and sweep of the area of operations. The SONG BIEN River flows in a SW-S direction through the heart of the area of operations. The river valley is covered with elephant grass five to six feet high and is dominated by the HO SON Mountains which are heavily forested. The area was so dense with jungle growth that landing zones were extremely limited in size and number. Intense AW fire was received from well dug-in positions up to and including .50 cal machineguns. Maneuver units were also subject to intense 57mm recoilless rifle and mortar fire indicating the presence of a heavy weapons unit. Based upon the defensive positions and the number and types of weapons encountered, it was estimated that elements of the 93rd and 95th Bns of the QUYET CHIEN (2VC) Regt and elements of the Regt Headquarters and weapons Bn were engaged in the "IRON TRIANGLE". In addition, enemy radio transmissions were intercepted indicating the presence of a major type headquarters or control unit. Infared coverage was used throughout the area which further confirmed a heavy concentration of hot spots in the area. Several thousand rounds of arty and approximately 20 sorties of TAC air and aerial rockets were fired into the area. All of the above described fire power including the B52 strike was necessary to prevent heavy casualties to the infantry which had attacked the area from three directions on the two previous days. Because of the lateness of the strike (1600 hrs) sufficient daylight did not remain for immediate sweeping of the target area. As a result, the enemy was afforded the opportunity to drag away his wounded and recover many of his dead. Evidence of many dead in the area was detected by the stench of dead VC bodies in the area which covered the entire valley floor.

c. Operations within the "IRON TRIANGLE" area dealt severe losses to two Bns of the QUYET CHIEN Regt, (93rd and 95th) and to elements of the regt headquarters. Results of the WHITE WING Operation in the IRON TRIANGLE (15-27 Feb) are as follows:

(1) Personnel Losses	(2) Weapons and Equipment	(3) Other Material
KIA 337	SKA 5	Rice 38 tons
KIA (EST) 407	AK 6	Cmbt Packs 20
WIA 4	LMG 5	Hand Grenades 27
WIA (EST) 1009	Rifles 6	Mines 5
VCC 15	US M1 Carbines 4	57mm Ammo 10
VC/NVA 19	US M1 Rifles 4	81mm Ammo 84
VCS 23	AA Wpn 1	82mm Ammo 5
	60mm Mortar 1	SA Ammo 8 Cases
	81mm Mortar 3	Plastic Gas Mask
	82mm Mortar 1	Surgical Equip (complete
	40mm Rkt Lch 1	with instruments)
	57mm RR 5	Medical supplies
	Mount .50 Cal 1	
	75mm RR 2	
	US BAR 5	
	9mm Pistol 1	
	SMG 4	
	US .30 Cal MG 1	

9. Mission: 2d Bde attacks SW in zone of the Div A0 to find, fix and destroy NVA/VC forces.

10. Concept of Operations:

a. 2d Bde attacks SW with two Bns to seize objectives COIL & RECOIL. One Bn establishes blocking positions vic RECOIL and another battalion attacks W from

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COIL driving the enemy into prepared blocking positions. A third battalion held in reserve to be used as a reaction and reserve force and to protect the Bde base and arty in the vic PONY.

11. Execution:

a. Operation EAGLE CLAW commenced with a TAC Air strike on Obj COIL (BR820 765) followed by a twenty minute arty prep which showered the Obj area with 930 rds. At 0948 the first lift of C Co lifted off from TWO BITS (BR848955) and air assaulted into COIL at 0958 hrs. By 1112 hrs the entire Bn had closed into COIL and A & B and C Cos moved out from the LZ to search out assigned areas. No enemy contact was made, however two dead VC were found vic BR814791 and 5x81mm mtrs rds were found abandoned by the enemy. B 1/77 Arty was air lifted into COIL by CH47 after the area had been secured by the infantry. At 0800 hrs 2/5 Cav became attached to 2d Bde from 3d Bde. The same A/C were used to carry 2/5 Cav as were to carry 1/5 Cav into Obj COIL. At 1200 hrs the arty fired a twenty minute prep on LZ JOE (BR778718) with 669 rds. At 1220 hrs the first lift of C 2/5 lifted off from PONY (IR800840) landing in RECOIL (BR760745) at 1230 hrs. The Bn closed the LZ at 1352 hrs. C Co was lifted out of JOE and seized LZ MIKE (BR772763) to round out all blocking positions. 2/12 Cav acting on information obtained from a POW sent B Co from SIX BITS (BR848102) to search for a large cave vic DS841048. At 1445 hrs B Co found the cave which was divided into several chambers and was large enough to hold two companies. Cave was destroyed by an engr demo squad. 2/12 Cav utilizing UH1D's and CH47's began to move from SIX BITS to PONY. The Bn closed PONY at 2000 hrs. A Co, the first company to arrive at PONY moved into a blocking position SE of PONY vic BR824822 for the night.

b. On 17 Feb at 0630 arty fired a TOT into the area between COIL and RECOIL expending some 431 rds, A & B Co attacked West on separate axis toward blocks set up at block #1 and LZ MIKE and PETE by elements of 2/5 Cav. 2/5 Cav attacked to seize LZ PETE with B Co. B Co made contact at 0915 vic BR768748 with an estimated VC Co with heavy wpns and large number of AW. A & C Co moved SW from LZ MIKE to help B Co and B Co 2/12 was attached to 2/5 Cav to help the situation. Co B 2/12 landed at an LZ BR755744 and immediately came under fire. Arty and TAC Air was used to support the ground troops. By 1800 hrs the enemy had broken contact. Results of the sharp action were 127 VC KIA (BC) and 100 VC KIA (EST), also captured and destroyed were 3x81mm mtrs, 4x57mm RR, 1x75mm RR, 75x81mm mtr rds and 10x57mm RR rds. The entire area was laced with commo wire, bunkers and defensive positions and numerous trails. From heavy weapons, the heavy AW fire received and the network of bunkers and commo wire and telephones in the area it was determined that 2/5 Cav had attacked and destroyed a Heavy Weapons Bn. A Co 2/12 Cav at the blocking position S of PONY (BR823823) came under heavy enemy attack by an estimated VC Co at 0415 hrs. in the morning. Arty and Smokey the Bear were used in support of the Co, enemy broke contact at 0700 hrs. When the enemy withdrew they left on the battle field 15 VC KIA (BC), 20 VC KIA (EST), and 17 WIA (EST), also found were 5 AK-47s, 35 KA Carbines, 2 RPD LMG, and one BR 40mm rocket launcher, 10 field packs, 2000 rds of SA ammo and 38 grenades. Friendly losses in the engagement were 1 KIA and 4 WIA.

c. On 18 Feb 2/5 Cav experienced some contact with the enemy attempting to flee the area. From 171000 Feb until 180600 Feb a total of 117 arty missions were fired expending a total of 879 rds. These missions were fired into stream beds, trails and other likely avenues of escape for the VC from the RECOIL area. In conjunction with an extensive H&I program, Smokey the Bear dropped flares over the area to further reduce enemy movement in the area.

Elements of 2/5 Cav continued to sweep the area of LZ PETE and JIM to locate and destroy abandoned enemy equipment. Enemy contact remained light and sporadic through out the day. At 1845 A Co air assaulted into blocking positions. Equipment located and destroyed by 2/5 Cav were two tons of rice, 5AT mines, 2 M14 mines, a large amount of small arms ammo, 1x82 mm mtr and bipod, 4x82mm rds, a rkt launcher and two containers of ammo. 1/5 Cav continued to attack West toward the blocks established by 2/5 Cav, A & B and engaged with sporadic individual VC while moving to link up with 2/5 Cav at 1205 hrs 3rd plt of B Co became engaged with an

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estimated Co size force vic BR779757. At 1350 hrs 2nd plat of A Co became engaged in the same vic. Arty and TAC Air was called in to engage the enemy positions. At 1530 hrs the two platoons were still pinned down by extremely heavy AW fire being placed on them from well positioned bunkers and emplacements. 1/5 Cav maneuvered A & B Co (-) to help the two pinned down platoons. The two companies remained heavily engaged with the enemy until dark at which time they were able to break contact and retrieve their dead and wounded from under the enemy's guns. A Co closed back into block #3 (BR778750) for the night, B Co closed into LZ MIKE. From the volume of heavy AW fire received and the numerous bunkers in the area it is estimated that A & B Co made contact with a heavy weapons Bn. Once friendly troops were clear of the area arty fired constantly into the area for the remainder of the night, and Smokey the Bear provided illumination to prevent the enemy from slipping out of the area. 2/12 Cav continued to secure PONY and DUCK through out the day. At 1315 hrs C Co conducted a raid into LZ GENE (BR785867) and GRAHAM (BR783879) to clear the area of VC snipers who had been firing at A/C in the area. The raid netted 1 VC KIA, 3 VCS and two weapons.

d. On 19 Feb 2/12 Cav was ordered to LZ SAM (BR743733) and then conducted attacks toward Obj 20 (BR750733) and 21 (BR732759). At 1430 hrs 2/12 Cav air lifted into SAM closing at 1549 hrs. A Co 2/5 became attached to 2/12 Cav. No enemy contact was made however abandoned equipment was found throughout the area. C Co 2/5 and B Co 2/12 commenced a parallel sweep from PETE to LZ SAM. At 0910 C Co 2/5 made contact with an estimated VC plat, B Co 2/12 maneuvered to attempt to flank the platoon and became engaged with an enemy platoon. Both companies broke contact while arty and TAC Air was called in to rako the area. Both units maneuvered to the high ground and conducted a coordinated attack against the enemy positions causing the enemy to become dislodged and withdraw. The action resulted in 36 VC KIA (BC) and the capture of misc equip. 1/5 Cav after closing into their blocking positions the night before, was ordered to attack with C Co attacking west and A Co to link up with C Co vic BR786757 and the two companies attack west into the IRON TRIANGLE area. B Co was ordered to place three blocks around LZ MIKE to prevent the enemy from slipping out. At 1500 hrs A & C Companies linked up and attacked west down the ridge line with C Co leading at 1635 hrs. C Co made contact in the area of the IRON TRIANGLE (BR783758) with heavy AW fire from well prepared positions. Contact remained heavy until dark when once again A & C Companies broke contact and evacuated their wounded. A Co returned to block #3 while C Co returned to BR787757 to take up defensive positions.

e. On 20 Feb 2/5 Cav continued to conduct local patrols in the vic of LZ PETE. Limited action was made with 4 rifle men and one other VC in widely separated instances. VC were taken under fire but escaped. During the night of 19 Feb two companies detected movement to their front but when illumination was fired into area nothing was observed. 2/12 Cav patrolled in the vic of LZ SAM while C Co attacked and seized Obj 20 and returned to SAM. Light contact was experienced by the patrols operating out from SAM. At 1050 hrs the recon plat of 2/12 Cav conducted an air assault into LZ JOHN (BR733759) on Obj 22 followed by A Co 2/12 Cav. Recon plat secured the LZ while one plat A Co attacked south to Obj 21 and one plat attacked north and A Co (-) remained at BR 729746. Three hundred meters from the LZ 1st plat A Co engaged three snipers. At the same time A Co (-) came under a strong attack by a est VC company armed with an unusual number of AW. 1st plat returned to relieve pressure on the company CP and after three determined attacks the enemy withdrew. At 1900 hrs the enemy broke contact leaving 23 dead in front of A Cos positions. A Co remained at block #3 and sent one platoon back into the IRON TRIANGLE area to recover bodies of troops killed the day before. B Co remained in blocking positions around LZ MIKE. C Co attacked the enemy strong point vic BR784758 after a heavy arty prep but once again was stopped by heavy concentrated fire power from well constructed positions. The company withdrew to their assigned position and arty once again began to pound the area.

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f. On 21 Feb 2/5 Cav conducted local patrols around PETE and at 1146 began movement to block #2 so as to clear the area around the IRON TRIANGLE for a B-52 attack later in the day. 2/12 Cav remained at LZ SAM and JOHN on Obj 22 and conducted local patrols vic of the two LZ's, no enemy contact was made. 1/5 Cav conducted one plat probe with C Co into the IRON TRIANGLE area in the early morning. The plat once again received heavy AW fire from the same positions as before. The plat withdrew after which A, B & C Companies were extracted from their positions around the IRON TRIANGLE and returned to PONY. At 1001 hrs the first flight of 3 B-52s dropped their bombs on the IRON TRIANGLE and at 1607 hrs the second flight of three dropped their bombs on the area. At 1614 hrs an A/C dropped 300 CS grenades on the Obj area after which arty fired a prep as 1/5 Cav air assaulted into LZ SOCKER (BR794756) with B Co securing the LZ for the Bn. The Bn closed at 1755 hrs. Recon plat secured block #1 at Obj COIL while A & C Co attacked west toward the IRON TRIANGLE area. 2/5 Cav in conjunction with 1/5 Cav air assaulted back into LZ PETE to set up blocking positions while the recon platoon seized block #3. At 1711 hrs another CS drop was made over the obj area. By dark A & C Co were up to the edge of the obj area where they held up for the night. Smokey the Bear provided illumination during the night while arty fired some 748 rds into the area. A psywar loudspeaker ship flew over the area urging the VC to surrender and safe conduct passes were dropped.

g. On 22 Feb 1/5 Cav attacked on into the IRON TRIANGLE area. They encountered no resistance but found 41 bodies and several IMG's and weapons through out the area. Also found were numerous bunkers, foxholes, trenches and defensive positions indicating a large force was housed in the area at one time. Upon completing their sweep of the area 1/5 Cav was lifted back to PONY closing at 1610 hrs. 2/5 Cav conducted a sweep from LZ PETE to LZ SAM and then lifted out of the position SAM to position DUCK. 2/12 Cav patrolled vic of SAM and JOHN finding some 81mm mortar ammo and 6 lbs of demo equipment. At 1300 2/12 Cav moved back to PONY by CH47.

h. 1/5 Cav and 2/12 Cav remained at PONY during the day and conducted maintenance on equipment and conducted local patrols. 2/5 Cav remained at DUCK and conducted maintenance of equipment. At 1450 hrs 2/5 Cav received AW fire at a bathing point which wounded 4 personnel. A Co was sent to clear the area and killed 5 VC who tried to escape from the area.

i. On 24 Feb 1/5 Cav and 2/12 Cav remained at PONY and continued to conduct maintenance of equipment. Lt Col Lynn received command of 2/12 from Lt Col Engram while Lt Col Lytle assumed command of 1/5 from Lt Col Ackerson. 2/5 Cav remained at DUCK and conducted maintenance of equipment.

j. On 25 Feb 2/12 Cav secured PONY and conducted one company search and destroy mission in zone north along the river. 1/5 Cav conducted sweep and destroy operations in zone. At 1125 hrs A Co 1/5 using 12 UH1D's air assaulted into LZ SLUG (BR860867) followed by B Co and the recon plat. A Co attacked to seize obj 22 (BR867873) while recon seized 21 (BR871869) and B Co seized 20 (BR874859). All units were lifted back to PONY at 1800 hrs. No enemy contact was made during the operations. 2/5 Cav conducted a three company operation in the mountains to the east of PONY. 2/5 Cav air assaulted in LZ BILL (BR850849) and PAT (BR861843). A Co landed at PAT and while B Co secured PAT C Co attacked and seized LZ MIKE (BR873 844). The only contact was made with the recon platoon who took two VC under fire who quickly fled the area. A Co found a 34 ton rice cache at BR831834. 2/5 Cav closed back into PONY with C Co remaining at LZ MIKE to act as a blocking force for 1st Bde Operations to the south.

k. On 26 Feb 2/5 Cav continued to secure DUCK while A Co secured a rice cache so that it could be evacuated. C Co remained in blocking positions at PAT and MIKE and conducted local patrolling. 2/12 Cav conducted one company air assault into LZ vic BR753884 which then patrolled south to seize obj BILL. The recon plat patrolled south along the river two thousand meters and returned to PONY. B Co moved to TWO BITS to provide security for the log base. 1/5 Cav conducted an air assault back into the IRON TRIANGLE area by landing at LZ MIKE after a ten minute arty preparation. A and C companies attacked toward the obj area with B Co trailing.

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A special Engr Demo team accompanied 1/5 Cav into the area to aid in blowing up bunkers and fortifications. 1/5 found elaborate camp sites with underground stoves and bunkered huts. There were indications that the enemy had been back into the area to bury their dead and police up lost equipment. 1/5 Cav found a total of 6 new graves in the area, but little equipment. 1/5 Cav was lifted back to PONY closing at 1657 hrs.

1. On the 27th of Feb 1/5 provided a one platoon blocking force at WILL for 2/5 Cav and one platoon as a blocking force at PAT to assist 2/8 Cav. 2/5 Cav conducted an air assault into NEAL with A and B companies. A Co attacked north up the ridge line toward WILL while B Co attacked to seize obj 3. No enemy contact was made during the operation. C Co was replaced at PAT by a platoon of 1/5 and was lifted to NEAL to become the Bn reserve. 2/5 Cav closed into DUCK at 1730 hrs. 2/12 Cav provided security for PONY. At 1410 hrs A Co moved to HAL to secure arty positions for Operation BLACK HORSE and C Co moved to GEORGE to also secure arty. 2/12 Cav returned to TWO BITS. At 271800 Feb 1/8 Cav and 2/8 Cav were attached to the 2d Bde for Operation BLACK HORSE, while 1/12 Cav came under operational control of 2d Bde for movement only.

m. On 28 Feb 2/12 Cav moved to TWO BITS from positions around PONY. 1/8 Cav remained at GEORGE in preparation for BLACK HORSE. 2/5 Cav remained at DUCK and also prepared for Operation BLACK HORSE. 1/12 Cav from BIRD to base camp by A/C and became attached to 1st Bde upon arriving back in base camp at 1200. A squad from 1/5 Cav was patrolling vic BR805827 when it engaged at 0730 hrs an unknown size enemy force. B Co moved to relieve pressure on the squad but when they arrived at the scene they found that the squad had been overrun. As a result of the action A & B Cos conducted an air assault into LZ LEE (BR811788) and LZ LINDA (BR793788) and attacked north down the ridge line to vic (BR790810). At this location both companies linked up and came under sniper fire from the surrounding high ground. A & B companies prepared to spend the night at the above location. 2/8 Cav was disposed with 2/8 (-) Cav at Cuff, C Co at GLOVE and A Co at a hospital area located vic (BR863815). B Co was air lifted to a position south of A Co and attacked north to link up with A Co attacking south. In the drive A Co captured 8 cases of SA ammo, 1 x 12.7mm AA gun, 1 x 50 cal MG mount, 5 cans of medical supplies, and one surgical kit.

12. Results:

a. The results of the operation were as follows:

Enemy Losses

<u>KIA (BC)</u>	<u>KIA (EST)</u>	<u>WIA</u>	<u>WIA (EST)</u>	<u>VCS</u>	<u>VCC</u>	<u>NVA</u>
339	409	8	1023	25	17	1

Equipment captured from the enemy: 86 x 81mm mtr rds, 10 x 57mm RR rds, 25 grenades, 39½ tons of rice, 8 cases of SA ammo, ruck sacks, 15 lbs of demo, mines, 7 x AKA - 47, 2 RPD LMG, 3-SKS, 1-BR-40, 3 x 81mm mtrs, 1 x 75mm RR, 4 x 57mm RR, 1 x 60mm mtr, 2 x 81mm bipod, 3 x LMG, 4 M1 rifles, 5 M1 carbines, 1 9mm pistol, 4 BAR's, 3 SMG, 1 x 12.7 AA, 1 x 50 cal mt, medical supplies, 1 surgical kit.

b. Friendly Losses:

<u>KIA</u>	<u>WIA</u>
46	211

13. Administration Matters: Administration matters for this period are carried in the after action report of WHITE WING.

14. Commanders Analysis:

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a. During "EAGLES CLAW" 2d Bde units inflicted many casualties on the enemy. By the number of heavy weapons captured and destroyed it is felt that 2d Bde units destroyed a heavy weapons Battalion in the vic of LZ PETE and inflicted great losses on a Regt Hq in the IRON TRIANGLE area. The extensive use of arty and TAC air inflicted great losses on the enemy the exact number will probably never be known, however from blood trails, and bloody bandages found through out the area of operations indicates that the enemy suffered more casualties than actually were counted.

b. Due to the movement detected by 2/5 on the night of 20 Feb and 1/5 on 21 Feb at PETE and block #3 it is felt that the enemy slipped out of the area in small 2 to 3 man groups. Further the requirement to withdraw friendly troops 8,000 meters from the area during a B-52 strike also permitted the enemy to leave the area prior to the strike at 1600. It is felt that the enemy left the area over a period of three days in small groups using small little used trails or moving cross country. Suspected direction of movement was to the West.

15. Recommendations: That the requirement to withdraw great distances during a B-52 strike be revised. That units always carry M-72 LAW into combat. That gas masks be carried in Dn train to be available for immediate use.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

for *Allen C. Smith*
 VINCENT A PACELLI
 Maj, Inf
 Adjutant
1st Inf
Assistant Adjutant

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