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HEADQUARTERS
1ST SQUADRON 9TH CAVALRY
1ST CAVALRY DIVISION (AIRMOBILE)
APO 96490

AVDARS-3

20 April 1969

SUBJECT: Combat Operations After Action Report

TO: Commanding General
1st Cavalry Division (Airmbl)
ATTN: AVDAGT-DT
APO 96490

1. Name of Operation: Toan Thang II.
2. Dates of Operation: 7 November 1968 - 17 February 1969
3. Location: III Corps Tactical Zone.
4. Control Headquarters: 1st Air Cavalry Division (Ambl).
5. Reporting Officer:

Sqdn CO

LTC William C. Rousse

Date

7 November 1968 - 6 January 1969

LTC James M. Peterson

7 January 1969 - 17 February 1969

Hq Troop

CPT Frank L. Alverson

Date

7 Nov 68 - 9 Dec 68

CPT David R. Smith

10 Dec 68 - 17 Feb 69

A Troop

MAJ Robert E. Poston

Date

7 Nov 68 - 10 Dec 68

MAJ George T. Calvert

11 Dec 68 - 17 Feb 69

B Troop

MAJ Frederick N. Olson

Date

7 Nov 68 - 13 Nov 68

MAJ Walter T. Colley

14 Nov 68 - 17 Feb 69

C Troop

MAJ John M. Toolson Jr.

Date

7 Nov 68 - 22 Jan 69

MAJ Cecil L. Schrader

23 Jan 69 - 17 Feb 69

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2-12

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D Troop

CPT Darrel A. Harrel

Date

7 Nov 68 - 27 Jan 69

CPT Norman E. Lersung

28 Jan 69 - 17 Feb 69

H Company

CPT George Paccereilli

DATE

7 Nov 68 - 17 Feb 69

62TH Inf Platoon

1LT Garland L. Gilmore

Date

7 Nov 68 - 3 Feb 69

1LT Richard K. Baumer

4 Feb 69 - 17 Feb 69

6. Task Organization:

a. Initial Organization - Hq, A, B, C, and D troops.

b. Subsequent Organization - D Troop was placed Opcon to 3rd Bde 1-4 December; Opcon, to the 2/5 Cav. from 4 December until 14th Jan; 15 Jan Opcon to the 3rd Bde; and finished the operation Opcon to 2/2 Mech, which was Opcon to the 2d Bde.

c. Attached:

H Company 75th Rangers (E Co 52nd Inf until 1 Feb 69)

62nd Infantry Platoon (CTT)

7. Supporting Forces: None

8. Intelligence: See 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) Intsum.

9. Mission: Conduct reconnaissance in general support of the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) in operation Toan Thang II.

10. Concept of Operation: The 1/9 Cav was in general support of the Division during the entire operation. The exception to this was placing D Troop under operation 1 control of various units during a large portion of the operation. The Air Cavalry Troops supported each Brigade area of operations with general reconnaissance and conducted other reconnaissance on a mission type basis. D Troop conducted both mounted and dismounted ground reconnaissance in conjunction with 2/5 Cav providing security for Phouc Vinh in A O Wolfe. At close of Toan Thang II D Troop was Opcon to 2/2 Mech providing security for Fire Support Base Andy (Quan Loi).

11. Execution:

a. The 1/9 Cav arrived in the III Corp Tactical Zone early in November and immediately began reconnaissance and security operations, monitoring enemy movement, exploiting caches and inflicting casualties on the enemy.

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The first significant find for the 1/9 during Toan Thang II occurred 27 November. B Troop on a general reconnaissance north of Loc Ninh rubber plantation, observed approximately 40 lighter skinned military aged males in a Montagnard village along with 25 bicycles and miscellaneous equipment. C 1/11 Armored Cav, operating 1 kilometer south was immediately notified and began moving toward the village. As C 1/11 moved north through the plantation they came under heavy machine gun and B-40 rocket fire from a bunker complex. Over 60 enemy were killed the first day as 2/12 Cav and ARVN units joined the fight. As B Troop provided a continuous screen to the north, Aerial Rocket Artillery (ARA), Tac Air, and artillery was used to block the fleeing enemy. B Troop killed at least 8 NVA during the operation, taking fire on numerous occasions, with an aircraft downed by 50 caliber ground to air fire. Enemy casualties during the 3 day encounter were over 250 enemy KIA.

b. During the month of November the heaviest movement seemed to be concentrated north of Loc Ninh and south of the "Fishhook" with the 1/9 Cav locating targets for fire support and providing Bomb Damage Assessments (BDA's). 17 airstrikes were directed by C Troop resulting in 24 enemy KIA with numerous bunkers and structures destroyed. C Troop Aero Scout teams killed 41 enemy with organic weapons and the aero rifle platoon was inserted 3 times, killing 3 more enemy. B Troop, supporting the 3rd Brigade from the "Fishhook" to east of Song Be, killed 42 NVA, 8 VC and destroyed 115 military structures. A Troop supported the 1st Brigade area of operations, locating many staging and supply areas which led to numerous arc lights and airstrikes. Starlight scopes were used by B and C Troops on night reconnaissance missions. They did not prove to be effective along roads, streams and in sparsely wooded areas. At close of the month D Troop was Opcon to the 23rd Arty Group at Quan Loi (Fire Support Base Shirley) providing security for Fire Support Base (FSB) Thunder IV. The 1/9 inserted and extracted the LRRP's 19 times during November. Teams had 17 significant sightings during the month killing 1 NVA, wounding 3 more, and capturing one AK-47.

c. During the month of December, Toan Thang II continued with enemy activity decreasing slightly. The 1/9 Cav continued reconnaissance in general support of the Division, hitting the enemy in his base areas. The most significant action of the months operations was the availability and utilization of tactical airstrikes by B Troop. Aero scouts teamed up with Tac Air on 21 occasions, resulting in 131 enemy killed, 50 probable killed, and 109 bunkers being destroyed. Stiffer missions were used frequently on the Serpes trail network, with 13 missions being flown for a total of 451 maximum readings. C Troop continued to support the 2nd Brigade area of operations. C Troop killed 78 enemy during the month in many scattered contacts and directed artillery resulting in 6 more enemy KIA. A Troop moved into a new Tactical Area Of Responsibility (TAOR) designated Navajo Warhorse along with the 1st Brigade.

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Several small ammo caches were found by A Troop and exploited by elements of the Brigade. A Troop accounted for 24 enemy killed and taking ground to air fire on 20 occasions, sustaining 1 aircraft hit. D Troop continued operations out of FSB Thunder IV. On 1 December the troop made contact with an estimated 2 squads of enemy, while screening for a convoy between Loc and Loc Ninh. D Troop received 3 to 9 rounds of RPG fire plus heavy small arms fire from a treeline 100 meters from the road. B Troop supported with rocket fire along with 1st Division Artillery. A quick search of the contact area revealed nothing with D Troop receiving 3 WIA's from the action. The 1/9 continued to support the LRRP's providing aircraft for 25 insertions and extractions, and close in reconnaissance to the LRRP's on a mission request basis.

d. Throughout January C Troop continued its surveillance in the 2nd Brigade AO and supported the base defense of Phouc Vinh with daily reconnaissance. In an area south of the "Fishhook", C Troop located a large ammo cache and maneuvered a friendly infantry unit into the area over a several day period. An estimated 30 tons of enemy ammunition was lifted out by CH-47. Aero-scout teams accounted for 74 enemy killed by organic weapons, 31 airstrikes were directed for an additional 13 KBA's, and numerous bunkers and supply points were destroyed. Observations by B Troop indicated the enemy continued to move through the 3rd Brigade A.O. (the Serpes Trail). Major contacts continue to occur along the infiltration route, 10 kilometers wide, bordered on the west by the Song Be River. B Troop continued to utilize tactical airstrikes with 39 sets of fighters being directed against the enemy. During the month of heavy contact in the 3rd Brigade A.O., B Troop accounted for 123 enemy killed by organic weapons while suffering only 1 WIA. A Troop continued support of the 1st Brigade, concentrating in the Sheridan Sabre A.O., and performed reconnaissance in A.O. Navajo Warhorse on a mission request bases. The A Troop aero rifle platoon was inserted 3 times along the Saigon River to check bunker complexes for possible caches. Results of these actions were 4 VC KIA with 1 VC POW. Numerous sampans and bunkers were destroyed.

e. The LRRP's completed 37 missions during January with their most significant contact occurring 6 January. Team 31 successfully held against an estimated 100 NVA. in Phouc Long Province just North of LZ Granite. B Troop and A.R.A. provided fire support 360° around the team. As gunships suppressed enemy positions, Team 31 was extracted under fire. The results of this action were 6 N.V.A. killed by the team, 25 KIA by A.R.A. and 5 KIA's for B Troop. During the month LRRP's had an average time in the field of 72 hrs. They killed 39 enemy, had 13 possible KIA's and captured 3 AK-47's.

f. The Combat Trackers were employed on 9 regain contact and 3 sweep missions during February with their most significant action occurring the 26th. A team was sent on a regain contact mission to LZ Grant in support of C 2/12. They found a blood trail just outside

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of Grant and followed it approximately 500 meters when they spotted an NVA soldier setting up a claymore mine. The team was spotted by the NVA, who then jumped into a bush detonating the mine. The Tracker Team Leader immediately engaged the individual, resulting in one NVA KIA. The trackers suffered a dog and handler wounded. For the month the Trackers found 2 US Carbines, 1 AK-47, 67 assorted mortar rounds, 1 US grenade and 2 flashlights.

g. One of the most significant contacts for the 1/9 during Toan Thang II occurred 12 February when a B Troop aero scout helicopter was shot down and destroyed by 50 caliber and automatic weapons fire. The fire came from an estimated NVA battalion plus moving through a rubber plantation East of Song Be. Another scout helicopter assisting in the efforts to extract the downed crew received fire from 3 sides taking numerous hits and crashed 1 kilometer north, immediately coming under enemy fire. 2 Squads of Aero riflemen - one inserted at each downed aircraft - came under intense machine gun and automatic weapons fire. Fire was returned killing 3 enemy while suffering 5 WIA. Both squads were extracted along with 3 surviving crew members. C Troop, ARA, Tac Air and Artillery supported the entire operation; a total of 18 airstrikes, 25 tons of artillery and an uncountable number of gunships were directed against the enemy. Continuous fire was placed on enemy positions until 1930 hrs. Damage assessment confirmed 66 enemy killed while B Troop had 3 US killed and 5 US wounded. The Air Force supported with suppressive fire (Spooky) until an immediate B-52 raid went in at 2100 hrs. A BDA early the next morning revealed no findings as the enemy had completely policed the battle field and moved south. B Troop was unable to reestablish contact.

h. A Troop continued to support the 1st Brigade thru February until the end of Operation Toan Thang II 17 February. Contact was light to moderate during this period in AO Navajo Warhorse. The most significant contact for A Troop occurred 15 February 10 kilometers East of Nui Ba Den Mountain when aero scout was shot down by heavy automatic weapons fire. The aero rifles were inserted to secure the downed aircraft and extract the crew. During the extraction the lift helicopters came under heavy 50 caliber and B-40 rocket fire. 2 UH-1H's were shot down, crashed and burned. The fire came from an undetermined size enemy force and no assessment could be made of fire power placed on the enemy. A Troop suffered 5 KIA's and 18 WIA's during the brief encounter, which was followed by an immediate B-52 raid and ground sweep.

i. D Troop continued to provide security for Quan Loi under operational control of the 2/2 Mechanized Infantry. On 1 February while conducting reconnaissance in the plantation area south of Quan Loi, the Blue Platoon received heavy automatic weapons and RPG fire. As the Red Platoon moved into assist, B Troop and A.R.A. provided fire support until an airstrike arrived. One $\frac{1}{4}$ ton truck was destroyed during the encounter as the NVA were trying to take equipment off the vehicle. After the contact, the area was searched and cleared by the

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Red and Blue Platoon with no findings. The LRRP's were inserted and extracted 44 times from 1-17 February. They suffered their first KIA of the operation 5 February after being ambushed north of Quan Loi. A.R.A. and B Troop supported the operation with one squad of Blues inserted. Extensive reconnaissance around the contact area revealed nothing as contact was never regained. During the month of February the LRRP's spent an average time in the field of 96 hrs. They killed 6 enemy wounding 16 more while taking 1 POW. They also captured 1 RPG and 3 AK-47's.

j. From 1-17 February the Trackers were employed on 5 regain contact and 4 search and destroy missions. On 7 February a team was sent to E 2/5, west of LE Andy on a regain contact mission. The Trackers followed a blood trail 25 meters from a night ambush and spotted 1 NVA. They engaged and wounded the individual who later turned out to be second in command of a 60 man NVA unit operating in the area. During the last 17 days of the operation the Trackers found 1 AK-47, 9mm pistol, 2 base areas and 23 bunkers, 3 inches of documents, 50 AK-47 rounds and 40 M-16 rounds.

k. Toan Thang II ended 17 February with the enemy combat ineffective in many areas of the 1st Cav TAOR. Continued emphasis upon exploitation of the results of aerial reconnaissance reaped great dividends for the 1/9 Cav and the 1st Team. Enemy base areas were saturated by Tac Air, artillery, troop insertions and various other offensive operations frequently initiated by findings of aero-scout teams. Large numbers of the enemy were killed and many of his rice caches were found and destroyed. He was denied the food and supplies he so urgently needed as sightings by 1/9 reconnaissance teams resulted in the capture or destruction of large amounts of rice, weapons, ammo and equipment. Combined efforts of all 1/9 elements with the various units of the 1st Team resulted in the successful interdiction of the enemy's routes of supply, his bases, and in a general disruption of his entire scheme of maneuver to the extent that his forces were essentially ineffective in most parts of the AO.

12. Results: Through extensive reconnaissance efforts, both ground and air, several large enemy contacts were made by the brigades and battalions, resulting in significant losses to the enemy. Several large staging areas were uncovered as well as numerous bunker complexes. Significant amounts of rice and supplies were captured or destroyed by 1/9. Supporting fire power was employed extensively by 1/9 Cav units accounting for heavy enemy losses both in personnel and equipment. Successful interdiction of enemy resupply routes was accomplished and the enemy was denied the use of his previous sanctuaries. In addition, a close working relationship was established between 1/9 Cav units and the various GVN Forces in the AO. This proved very beneficial to all, as the 1/9 Cav

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provided mobility and firepower while the GVN forces provided good intelligence and reaction forces. A resume of enemy losses imposed by the 1/9 Cavalry Squadron organic weapons during operation Toan Thang II is as follows:

NVA KIA	557
VC KIA	101

13. Administrative Matters: None

14. Special Equipment and Techniques:

a. One asset the Division has which requires expeditions handling is the : Combat Tracker Teams. Trackers can be of irreplaceable value to unit commanders under several circumstances. Trackers can be used to:

1. Re-establish contact with the enemy after initial contact is lost.

2. Provide the unit commander with all available intelligence concerning the enemy's direction of movement, speed and number.

3. Assist in local reconnaissance, such as to enemy bases and rocket sites.

4. Train selected personnel in the art of visual tracking, such as point men of infantry platoons or companys.

a. Tracker teams consist of 5 men, visual trackers and a black Labrador scent dog. Time is of the essence when employing tracker teams. An immediate request should be sent through the chain of command to brigade level and the Air Cavalry Troop Liaison officer. The Cavalry Squadron should provide the transportation for the teams to the field location of the requesting unit. This prevents delays which could make the Combat Trackers operationally ineffective.

b. During Toan Thang II Tac Air seemed to be most effective when directed by 1/9 aero-scout teams. Emphasis should be placed on using combined Air Cavalry Squadron-Tac Air Teams in areas where employment of ground troops is not contemplated.

c. Starlight scopes mounted in either OH-6A or UH-1H helicopters did not prove to be effective in spotting enemy movement during night reconnaissance missions over rough terrain.

d. The sniffer has proved to be very effective in locating the enemy in areas where aero scout teams cannot observe enemy locations due to thick foliage, common in many parts of the Division A.O. A common tendency is to employ sniffer missions in areas where the enemy is known to be. This should be avoided as it wastes Squadron

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resources and exposes aircraft and crews to unneeded risks.

15. Commanders Analysis

a. The operational capabilities of the Squadron were fully exploited during Toan Thang II. Daily reconnaissance activities were influenced by existing weather conditions and availability of aircraft. The validity of the general support role for the Squadron was clearly evident throughout the operation as Squadron resources were employed in every corner of the vast 1st Team AO.

b. Detaching any Troop from this squadron adversely affects its ability to perform its mission most effectively for the Division. During Toan Thang II D Troop has been Opcon to other units. Lack of this ground reconnaissance capability restricts the squadron largely to aerial reconnaissance. Whenever tactical conditions permit, the Troops of the Squadron should be employed under squadron control in support of the division reconnaissance plan.

16. Recommendations:

a. That Combat Tracker Teams be utilized within their capabilities and limitations whenever possible to enhance the overall effectiveness of ground units.

b. Emphasis be placed on operations with Tac Air and 1/9 Cav in areas where employment of ground troops is not contemplated.

c. That sniffer missions not be run in areas where the enemy is known to be. This exposes aircraft and crews to unneeded risks and wastes Squadron resources.

James M. Peterson
JAMES M. PETERSON
LTC, ARMOR
Commanding