

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS, 11TH ARMORED CAVALRY REGIMENT
APO San Francisco 96257

AVIC-CO

22 May 1969

SUBJECT: US Armor Operations in Vietnam

1. This resume briefly outlines the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment's participation in Operation Montana Raider during the period from 12 April 1969 to 14 May 1969, while the Regiment was OPCON to the 1st Air Cavalry Division.
2. It is hoped that the significance of this extensive jungle operation conducted by the Blackhorse Regiment may be of some value in furtherance of tank and cavalry operations in South Vietnam.

James H. Leach
JAMES H. LEACH
Colonel, Armor
Commanding

DECLASSIFIED

Authority AWD 873544

By JW NARA Date 11-15

CONFIDENTIAL

"BLACKHOUSE ON THE MOVE"

Address Given By
Colonel JAMES H. LEACH
Commanding Officer, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment

TO

The ARVN Armor Conference
22 May 1969

Today, I will cover one brief, 32-day operation called MONTANA RAIDER, which was based on a concept prepared by the staffs of the 1st Air Cavalry Division, and the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, in fulfillment of a II Field Force requirement to reconnoiter selected hostile areas of known enemy sanctuaries, which had not recently been investigated. As a matter of fact, most of these areas had never been penetrated by armor.

I. INTRODUCTION:

a. THE TERRAIN

Operation MONTANA RAIDER was conducted in three phases between 12 April and 14 May. The scene of the operation was in Northern III CORPS; in Eastern War Zone C. The area of operations straddled the SAIGON River, and was bounded by the CAMBODIAN Border on the North, the MICHLIN Plantation on the South, Highway 13 on the East, and NOI BA DEN on the West. To aid in familiarization, the cities of DAU TIEU, TAY NINH, and AN LAM are noted on the map.

The areas of operations for each phase are shown on the map: Phase I occurred in the crescent area Northwest of Dau TiEU, Phase II North of the razorback, and Phase III in the AN LAM THACH area.

All three areas of operations presented us with similar terrain problems. A substantial portion of the area was covered with double and triple canopy jungle, and traversed by numerous streams flowing into the SAIGON River. The terrain was not particularly rugged; however, the dense jungle cover forced our Armor-Infantry teams to break jungle during the entire operation.

b. THE ARMY

Eastern War Zone C had long been established as a rear service area and transportation zone for the men and equipment entering South Vietnam from CAMBODIA. Elements of two North Vietnamese divisions were believed to be operating in the area; however, the exact regimental identifications and their locations were unknown. When we arrived in the area, it was felt that the three regiments of the 1st NVA Division were dispersed West of the SAIGON River with the 95C Regiment in the crescent area, the 18B Regiment North of landing zone CHA T, and the 101D Regiment North of NOI BA DEN. Our subsequent intelligence findings during Phase I proved this suspected configuration erroneous. East of the SAIGON River, the 7th NVA Division was believed to

CONFIDENTIAL

DECLASSIFIED

Autonomy AND 873541
By JW NARA Date 11-15

CONFIDENTIAL

be dispersed along the MICHAEL-THOMSON supply/infiltration corridor. The 145th Regiment was believed to be located just north of the MICHAEL Plantation, the 141st Regiment in the BISHIEN Area, and the 209th Regiment operating along the corridor from a base in the MINH THUEN area.

Thus, our intelligence gathering objectives became two fold; The location and destruction of enemy rear service areas, and secondly, the identification and destruction of the regiments of the 1st and 7th NVA Divisions.

II. PRE-OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES

a. COMINT AND COMINT

Operation MONTANA MAILED actually began on 12 April when the 1st Air Cavalry Division assumed operational control of the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment (-). A reinforced infantry battalion, 1/ 6th Cavalry, was provided by the 1st Air Cavalry Division to create the combined arms teams necessary to exploit the area of operations assigned for Phase I. The Regiment was assigned the mission to conduct Reconnaissance in Force in the crescent area.

b. PREPARATIONS FOR THE MAILED N

Prior to the deployment of forces into the Phase I area of operations, several pre-operational activities were conducted.

A cover and deception plan was formulated which led the enemy to believe that the Regiment was moving north of NUI BA LON. The plan included the "loss" of fabricated patrols and the careful use of "security sites" in radio transmissions. The most important facet of the cover and deception plan was the Regiment's movement past the area of operations to laager positions near BAU TIEN on 12 April. At these laager positions, infantry companies were infused into the First and Second Squadrons. On 13 April the Regiment attacked from the north east to the southeast (the movement was actually back along the route used the previous day).

Secondly, an extensive visual reconnaissance program was conducted in the area of operations and adjacent areas by the Air Cavalry Troop. The 1st Squadron gathered was used to verify claimed B-52 Target bases.

On 12 April, the movement of the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment from the LAM SON and BISHIEN areas was accomplished when the two Squadrons and the Headquarters element relocated 76 miles from BISHIEN to the vicinity of BAU TIEN in eight hours. The route of movement proceeded from BISHIEN to PHU C. HU, across the SAU N River to BAU TIEN, then along Highway 1 to BAU TIEN, and finally from BAU TIEN to BAU TIEN. From a point 10 kilometers west of BAU TIEN, the 1st Squadron proceeded to PHU C. HU, BARBATA and the 1st Squadron moved on and assumed as called for in the cover and deception plan; while the Headquarters Headquarters and Squadron 2nd Platoon moved into BAU TIEN base area. Along the final leg from BAU C. HU to BAU TIEN, the Air Cavalry Troop provided cover for the Regiment as it passed through this area where the enemy is known to conduct numerous ambushes. The movement was made with no resistance.

CONFIDENTIAL

DECLASSIFIED

Autonomy NWD 873541

3. JW NAPA Date 11-15

CONFIDENTIAL

III. PHASE I

a. INTRODUCTION

Phase I of Operation MONTANA RAID began on 13 April the general concept of Phase I was for our two Squadrons and one Battalion Task Forces to conduct zone reconnaissance in their respective A/C's, in General Support to the Regiment provided "Pink Teams" (1 H-43 and 1 Cobra) for three task forces. The Air Cavalry Troop was also tasked to conduct Air BDA of B-52 Strikes, and to provide the Aero-Rifle Platoon (ARP) for immediate exploitable targets.

b. ACTIONS

1. The first significant contact occurred on 13 April when the ARPs engaged and entrenched enemy forces during the ground BDA of a B-52 Strike. As the contact continued, reinforcements were provided from A/1/11th ACR and a Rifle Platoon of D/2/12th Cavalry from Landing Zone White.

2. After a day of negative enemy contact, C/1/11th ACR was moved across the SUOI BA HAO and placed OPCON to the 1/6th Cavalry at FSB WHITE. In order to cross the stream, we requested an airborne bulldozer and an AVLB. C Troop came into contact after crossing the stream and was reinforced by A/1/11th ACR.

3. The next day, 16 April, we moved B/1/11th ACR across the SUOI BA HAO and placed all three Troops (A, B, and C) OPCON to the First Squadron. The First Squadron's jump CP moved from a field location south of the stream to landing zone WHITE. While making this move the jump CP was ambushed. The command and logistical vehicles returned fire and assaulted, fixing the enemy until Troop G reinforced. During this contact, one of our main performers was an inoperable Sheridan with an understrength crew which included an infantryman.

4. The next significant contact occurred on 17 April when A and B Troops entered a large base camp in a bamboo thicket. Five rifle companies of the 1/6th Cav Task Force were employed in a blocking role. This contact continued for two days. Early on the 19th of April, Teams A and B were moved West across the stream in preparation for Phase II. Again we utilized an airborne bulldozer and an AVLB to cross the SUOI BA HAO and to extract the two troops from the jungle.

c. INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence gathered during Phase I accurately located the 18B Regiment, and a transportation element of the 82D Rear Service Group. We feel that this Phase of the operation had the effect of deterring future 1st NVA Division attacks in the DAU TIENG area, while forcing the forward elements of the 18B NVA Regiment to relocate away from DAU TIENG and North of the SUOI BA HAO.

3

CONFIDENTIAL

DECLASSIFIED

Authority AND 823541

3. JW NARA Date 11-15

CONFIDENTIAL

a. STATISTICS

This slide shows the results of Phase I.

This slide shows the TAC Air and Artillery Support used by the Regiment.

b. PLAT-OPs AT 1400

Phase I, an 8-day commitment, was terminated on 20 April. The First and Second Squadrons withdrew from the AO, and conducted a twenty-four hour maintenance stand down in larger positions outside DAT TING.

IV. PHASE II

a. INTRODUCTION

Prior to initiating Phase II in War Zone C, a substantial redeployment of forces was necessary. To adequately support Phase II, it was decided that the Regimental Headquarters and the Squadron Trains would be relocated at QUAN LOI. On 22 April, the First and Second Squadrons and Regimental Headquarters moved from DAU TING and completed the 90-mile road march to QUAN LOI in a little more than 12 hours. From DAU TING, the Regiment re-traced the route to DAU CUNG, and from DAU CUNG, the Regiment crawled north on Highway 13 to QUAN LOI. Once again, the Air Cavalry Troop covered the regiment's movement.

The area assigned for Phase II lay in the center of the MICHELIN-ROUTED infiltration/supply corridor. As in Phase I, it was utilized by the enemy as rear service and trans-shipment area; here we anticipated locating caches and contacting elements of the 2d Rear Service Group. Intelligence developed by the Air Cavalry Troop revealed that the areas of heaviest enemy activity were located in the Northwestern corner and the extreme Southern tip of the area of operations. In these areas, active base camps and heavily used truck trails were sighted.

The terrain in the Phase II area of operations presented the Regiment with several problems. There was only one route into the area of operations: Route 240 from QUAN LOI. Also, the likeliest targets were fringed by terrain obstacles: The drainage pattern in the Northwestern portion of the area of operations permitted vehicular entry only from the North, while numerous deep, banked streams in the Southern tip of the AO hindered rapid movement in that area.

Phase II was initiated on 24 April when the First and Second Squadrons followed route 240 and entered the AO from the northeast. To facilitate the move into the area of operations, engineer Sweep Teams were moved into LONG LAO CHI Special Forces camp. IDG forces provided security for the sweep teams, and assisted in clearing the road.

The general concept of this phase was to deploy into the AO and perform a reconnaissance with the three task forces.

CONFIDENTIAL

DECLASSIFIED

Authority AND 873541

3. JW NAPA Date 11-15

CONFIDENTIAL

b. ACTIONS

1. The first significant contact occurred on 27 April when two LOM's were shot down over an enemy base camp in the northwestern corner of the area of operations. C/1/11th ACR and M/3/11th ACR were called to reinforce A/2/7th Cavalry, then in heavy contact. Terrain dictated that these elements move north out of the AO, and proceed west along route 246, and attack the enemy from the north. Again it was necessary to employ an AVLB to replace a destroyed bridge along route 246.

2. Two days later, on 29 April, A/2/7th Cavalry, C Troop and M Company made heavy contact in the same base area. C/2/11th ACR was sent to reinforce; however, its trail element was ambushed along the route and its movement was further impeded when two tanks were disabled by mines along route 246. The mines had been planted in the tracks made by C Troop and M Company two days previous. Upon reaching the AVLB site on route 246, two tanks developed mechanical problems and G Troop's fifth tank bellied on a log; therefore, G Troop was unable to reach the objective area. The disabled vehicles and an engineer platoon were used to secure the bridge itself.

3. On 30 April, B and D/2/7th Cavalry reinforced with Sheridans and ACAVs, made contact with the enemy in a well developed tunnel complex Northwest of FSB JAMES.

4. On the same day, Teams M/3/11th ACR and A/2/7th Cavalry, killed 19 NVA in a tunnel and bunker complex in the Northwestern corner of the area of operations.

On 1 May the forces reassembled in the vicinity of FSB's RITA and JAMES for the withdrawal to laager positions near AN LAM and QUAN LOI. This movement was a slow, tedious one, requiring about 20 hours because of three mining incidents and difficult terrain. To facilitate the movement, the 919th engineers constructed a ford across the SAI SON River at T'ING LE CHON, and Air Cavalry from the regiment and the 1st Air Cavalry Division secured engineer mine sweep teams in advance of the withdrawing column.

c. INTELLIGENCE

Significant intelligence during Phase II came from documents captured on 27 April originating from headquarters of the 96th NVA Artillery Regiment. These included hand traced maps showing enemy firing positions used to rocket LAI KHE and DAU TIEN. Other documents captured throughout the area of operations provided useful intelligence on the operation and missions of the 22d Rear Service Group.

d. STATISTICS

This slide shows the TAC Air and Artillery support used by the regiment.

During Phase II, we succeeded in locating thirteen large enemy food and arms caches, these are included in the results slide.

CONFIDENTIAL

DECLASSIFIED

Authority AWD 87354

JW NARA Date 11-15

CONFIDENTIAL

a. POST-OPERATION

Phase II was followed by a four day period of maintenance in field locations near AN LUC and QUAN LOI.

V. Phase III

a. INTRODUCTION

In Phase III, the Regiment shifted its attention to the east bank of the SAIGON River, in the vicinity of MINH THANH. Regimental operations began in the North with plans to move into the other South on order.

The difficult terrain required us to tailor our forces to the local conditions. Since the area east of MINH THANH was the least desirable for tracked vehicles, we decided that infantry should be employed there. The SONG TA NONG, running east-West through the AO presented another obstacle to North-South movement. In the western portion of the area of operations, steep banked streams entering the SAIGON River impeded movement in that area. The one good route into the area was route 245, and as in Phase II, this one route was used by both Squadrons as their LOC. Cover was dense throughout the area, and our Armor-Infantry teams broke jungle during the entire phase.

We anticipated contacting Rear Service elements throughout the area of operations, and intelligence available in the area indicated that elements of the 165th NVA Regiment were located in the Southern portions of the AO, and the AB Battalion, 209th NVA Regiment, North of MINH THANH was reported to be maintaining a base for its ambush mission along Highway 13.

As in the two previous Phases, combined arms teams were formed from the First and Second Squadrons, and the 5/7th Cavalry, 1st Air Cavalry Division, which was at FSB JOE.

Phase III began on 7 May. The three task forces were ordered to conduct area reconnaissance by pushing into the western part of their respective AO's, and working back out toward the east. Little contact was made during the first several days; therefore, the Regiment was given the mission of searching the east side of the SAIGON River which was the most likely cache area. No significant caches were found although several small groups of NVA were spotted and engaged with negligible results.

On 11 May, the Regiment moved south since the North AO was essentially void of enemy. The Regiment lost OMC 2N of 5/7th Cavalry, but retained control of two infantry companies from the 1st Air Cavalry Division.

b. ACTIONS

1. The initial contact here occurred on 11 May when the Regimental

CONFIDENTIAL

DECLASSIFIED

Authority AND873544

By JW, NASA Date 11-15

CONFIDENTIAL

Aero-Rifle Platoon, reinforced by G/2/11th ACR engaged a transportation element in a bunker complex. We captured eight NVA Troops and killed five in a tough bunker fight.

2. A and B Troops also came into contact with an entrenched enemy force five kilometers northwest of the MICHELIN the same day.

3. In a night amoush on 12 May, G Troop engaged a squad sized element passing their position. The action resulted in the death of one Viet Cong Officer and the capture of a Viet Cong Senior-Captain.

c. INTELLIGENCE

Our best intelligence during Phase III came from the nine prisoners captured. Six of the prisoners were from the 96th Artillery Regiment, and were carrying 8 rockets to the LAI KHE area when captured. Three rockets were captured, five were destroyed by air strikes. Identification of transportation personnel from the 82a Rear Service Group came from two prisoners captured on 22 May. However, our most significant intelligence came with the capture of LY THAI LIN on 12 May. LIN had been with the Viet Cong for twenty years: He had the rank of Capt AIN and served as the Political Security Chief for the VO Sub-Region 1. This man is capable of providing much valuable political information, and he is currently in SAIGON being exploited by the South Vietnamese Government.

d. STATISTICS

This slide shows the results of Phase III.

This slide shows the TAC Air and Artillery Support used by the Regiment.

e. POST-OPERATION

Upon completion of Phase III, the Regiment was ordered to BIN HOA and BLACK OAK Base Camp for a much needed maintenance period.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

a. OPERATIONAL STATISTICS

During Operation MONTANA RAIDER, the Regiment moved over 1,000 miles. Over 200 miles were on roads, while nearly 800 miles involved jungle breaking operations including close enemy contact.

The final statistics compiled in Operation MONTANA RAIDER are shown here:

b. LESSONS LEARNED

1. Area reconnaissance VS Zone reconnaissance. Area recon has troops in all of the AO immediately. Zone recon tends to push enemy in front of troops.

CONFIDENTIAL

DECLASSIFIED

Authority AND 873541

By JW NASA Date 11-15

CONFIDENTIAL

2. Need for Infantry. Infantry needed for dismounted capability to search bunker complexes.
3. Deception Plans. They reduce the probability of mines and ambushes while allowing the unit to capitalize on its speed and mobility.
4. Use of Disabled Vehicles. Crews needed with vehicles and can be used as stationary fire platforms.
5. Keep Crews with Vehicles: Crews needed to both fight and fix them.
6. Manning Priority. Priority of manning vehicles should be tanks, M551's, ACAVs.
7. Logistical Tail Wag Tactical Dog. Ability to supply the troops limits the duration and radius of operation.
8. VTR and AVLB Importance. These vehicles necessary for sustained operations.
9. Maintain Contact. Air Cav Troop is used to maintain contact. Pressure must be maintained until enemy is destroyed.
10. Reaction Time. Even though armor vehicles are present in the area, the decision to deploy them must be made early to compensate for slow movement through the jungle.
11. Don't be disillusioned if nothing happens. The absence of enemy is in itself intelligence.

The most significant conclusion drawn from Operation MONTANA RAIDER is that there are no un-tankable areas. There may be terrain where tanks cannot go; however, in any areas, there are some places where tanks can almost always be employed.

We should maintain as our AXI M as Cavalrymen and Tanker, "We'll Try!"

CONFIDENTIAL

DECLASSIFIED

Authority AWD 873541

3, JW, NARA Date 11-15

CONFIDENTIAL

RESULTS NOTIFICATION

ENEMY LOSSES	KIA	247
	POW	15
	TDN/RICE	42
	INDIV WPNS	245
	CS WPNS	19
	TDN/AMMO	4

FRIENDLY LOSSES	KHA	45
	WHA	240
	TANKS CBD	12
	TANKS CBL	8
	M551 CBD	4
	M551 CBL	1
	ACAV CBD	10
	ACAV CBL	9
	LOH DEST	3
	UH-1H DEST	0
AH-1G DEST	0	

CONFIDENTIAL

DECLASSIFIED

Autonomy **AND 873541**

By **JW** NARA Date **11-15**