

RG 472
28th MHD, AAKs
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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
28TH MILITARY HISTORY DETACHMENT
11TH CAVALRY REGIMENT
SAN FRANCISCO 96257

AVIC-WE

8 Jan 1970

SUBJECT: Combat After Action Interview Report

THRU: Commanding General
United States Army, Vietnam
ATTN: Command Historian
APO San Francisco 96385

TO: Headquarters
Department of the Army
ATTN: O. C. M. H.
Washington, D. C. 20315

1. NAME AND TYPE OF OPERATION: The Search and Seal of MINH DUC, during Operation KENTUCKY COUGAR.
2. DATE OF OPERATION: 1 - 2 November 1969.
3. LOCATION: Reference Map Series L7014, Sheet Number 6332 III, AN LOC sheet of BINH LONG Province, Republic of VIETNAM.
4. CONTROL HEADQUARTERS: 11th ACR, QUAN LOI, VIETNAM.
5. PERSONS BEING INTERVIEWED: All persons mentioned by name in EXECUTION section.
6. INTERVIEWING SPECIALIST: Enlisted personnel of 28th Military History Detachment, 11th ACR.
7. TASK ORGANIZATION: See Inclosure 1.
8. SUPPORTING FORCES: See Inclosure 1.
9. BACKGROUND INFORMATION: Although the 11th ACR had performed several seals the month before this operation, it was the first seal for the US troops involved.

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10. INTELLIGENCE:

a. Enemy Forces: Intelligence indicated that the 271st, 272nd, and 95A Regiments were located within the area of the Fishhook. There were no main force units at MINH DUC, however local forces in this area were the MINH DUC local force (to include three DUC VINHS') and AN LOC district force, which normally operates east of QL 13. A squad of these forces normally enters MINH DUC village from the western side twice per week. They also enter one or two days after the rubber workers have been paid, to collect rice and taxes. The last contact in MINH DUC was 26 October 1969, when one VC was killed. The village has a population of approximately 2,000, and a current Blacklist is available at AN LOC District.

b. Terrain: MINH DUC lies in the center of a rubber plantation, and thus is suitable to armor operations.

c. Weather: On 1 November, the night the seal was placed, it was a groggy muddy cold-wet night. The day of the search, however, was fair.

11. MISSION: The Third Squadron, 11th ACR, the 15th ACR (ARVN), and Regional Forces under the command of Major My (Task Force My) were to seal and search MINH DUC village at 012400 November 1969 to apprehend VC/NVA forces in the village and destroy the infra-structure.

12. CONCEPT OF OPERATION AND EXECUTION: On 1 November 1969 at H-45 (2315 Hours), How/3/22 and the US and ARVN artillery at AN LOC were to begin firing to cover the movement of K and L Troops, 3/11 ACR into their seal positions around MINH DUC. In their NDP's the two troops waited seven minutes after the scheduled time for the artillery to begin. Finally the units moved out, operating in radio silence and maintaining a blackout by using only Starlight scopes for navigation. Because the scopes do not indicate depth of field, the drivers had some difficulty in maneuvering, and a few minor mishaps occurred when drivers hit rubber trees or other tracks.

Since the operation was behind schedule, the illumination fires began when K and L Troops were still moving through the rubber. The fires were planned to begin when the troops were in place. The ACRV's rolled through the eerie light for some minutes before reaching their positions. K Troop assumed its ordered position, but received no signal from the 3/15th Cavalry (ARVN) indicating the links were complete. First Lieutenant Wilfred Fuller, K Troop third platoon leader, sent his scouts repeatedly to his right flank to signal the ARVN unit with three flashes from the red-filtered flashlight. The ARVN response was not forth coming, but the ARVN's reported to their advisors that the seal was complete. It was not until morning that the 200 meter gap between K Troop and the 3/15th Cav (ARVN) was discovered and filled. Evidently the ARVN's were 200 meters east of their assigned position. (See Inclosure 2, sketch of movement).

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In their movement K Troop, 3/11 ACR had moved from its NDP at XT 698835 to the west corner of MINH DUC. L Troop, 3/11 ACR had travelled to the east corner of MINH DUC, extending its diagonal to K Troop. ARVN units, 2/15th and 3/15th Cav, formed two sides of the triangle, sealing MINH DUC from the northeast to the southwest corners. (See Inclosure 2).

When all the forces were thought to be in position, and the village sealed, a PSYOPS ship broadcast instructions to the villagers concerning the morning search. The artillery fired illumination until 0330 hours, enabling the troopers to equally space the vehicles. The men also set out trip flares and claymore mines behind their vehicles, which faced into the village.

The illumination made the Starlight scope effective in observing the sealed area. At 0330 hours an Air Force "moonshine ship" dropped flares. The Air Force ship was replaced by an ARVN "Spooky" began firing, and Captain Robert L. Harris, Commander of K Troop, quickly called the 15th Cav (ARVN) advisor to find out why. He finally learned that there was no contact in progress, the "Spooky" was just testing its guns. The silence was not broken again until daylight when the PSYOPS repeated its broadcast, and the 399th and 212th Regional Force Companies and the Nationalist Police entered the village. The forces split into four-man teams of 3 Regional Force members and 1 National Policeman, searching every house for 15 minutes, moving from house to house, street to street, until the entire village was searched. Major My, district chief, and his advisor, Major Charles Griffiths, planned the search.

Major My, having learned from the previous search operation in AP PHU, had given the Regional Forces 13 hours of intensified training in searching the previous day. He also taught the National Police the use of the minesweeper.

Along with the search, Major Griffiths had coordinated a MEDCAP for the day. These MEDCAPS occur on a weekly basis, and villagers with prolonged illness are given a week's supply of medicine at each visit. Since a search and seal operation tends to alienate the villagers, it was hoped the MEDCAP would offset this effect.

As the search progressed, Major Griffiths and Major My discovered the Regional Forces were moving through the village too fast. Although the RF's searched thoroughly in the beginning, they became tired and sped through the search towards the end.

The National Police detained 11 people, of whom 7 were released immediately. Of the four detainees, one was a draft-dogder, two had false identity cards, and one was a Hoi Chanh from the First NVA Division. The Hoi Chanh claimed he was a South Vietnamese double agent. He also claimed that "Long" (a pseudonym), with beards and moustaches, operated Ch. Com. radios that monitored the ARVN radio nets,

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and had 24 hours or more of the search and seal operation." The operation did not indicate whether the prisoner was telling the truth or not, and his report was positively confirmed.

In their search the Regional Police used a Blacklist of suspect personnel which was furnished by officials in An Loc. The sources are varied, but supposedly the names on the list have been investigated.

About 0100 hours the search was complete, and the seal was lifted. The troops withdrew, and Minh Duc continued its business.

13. RESULTS AND COMMENTS: "The Regional Forces operate continuously, and get tired easily. Actually, Minh Duc was too large for two companies to search. A battalion was needed. Some areas were not hit-- like the cleared areas around the perimeter. The Regional Forces were reluctant to search individual bunkers in the houses. Most of this resulted from the lack of interest in the operation on the part of the junior officers. They did not supervise the men. The lack of training also hurt the operation. If the RF's had been trained in searching more, the operation would have been better. If they had found something, they would have search harder. As it was, after an hour's extensive search with no results, the Regional Forces became tired, and started to walk through the village," MAJ Griffiths commented. "The operation took only six hours, and it should have taken eight or ten."

CPT Harris said, "The search was fair, but it was good training because the 11th ACR will probably do more seals in the future."

Mr Sylvester, Province Senior Advisor, said, "The real purpose of this is the added emphasis on training ARVN's, the Dong Tien program."

"If there are VC in the village, the seal is effective. But the gap and lack of security hurt the operation. We need to train the RF's extensively in search operations" summed MAJ Griffiths.

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INCLOSURE 1 (Task Organi. of Friendly Forces' Mission)

a. Task Organization

TRP K
K/3/11 Cav

TRP L
L/3/11 Cav

CO M
M/3/11 Cav

SQDN CON
How/3/11 Cav
Mort 3/11 Cav
3/919 Engrs
Gr Surv Sec

TRF 2
2/15 Cav
15/4/9 Inf

TRP 3
3/15 Cav
16/4/9 Inf

SQDN CON
14/4/9 Inf
V-100 Plat

TF My
RF Co
RF Co
RF Co
1 Plt NPFF
1 Intel Sqd

b. Friendly Forces

(1) 5th Div (ARVN) continues operations in Binh Dong, Binh Long, Phouc Long Provinces to destroy VC/NVA forces and destroy the enemy infra-structure.

(2) 11th ACR continues operations in An Loc/Loc Ninh areas to destroy VC/NVA forces while concentrating efforts against the enemy infra-structure.

(3) 9th Regiment (ARVN) continues reconnaissance operations to the south of 15th ACR and secures QL13.

(4) 1/11th ACR continues reconnaissance operations east of QL13.

(5) 2/11th ACR continues reconnaissance operations in Loc Ninh area.

(6) Binh Long Province NPFF and Intelligence Squadron supervises the search of Minh Duc (XT7282) 20700 November 1969.

(7) 255RF Company is located in SE corner of Minh Duc.

(8) Psy Ops ship will play instructional tape upon completion of seal and again at first light on 2 November 1969.

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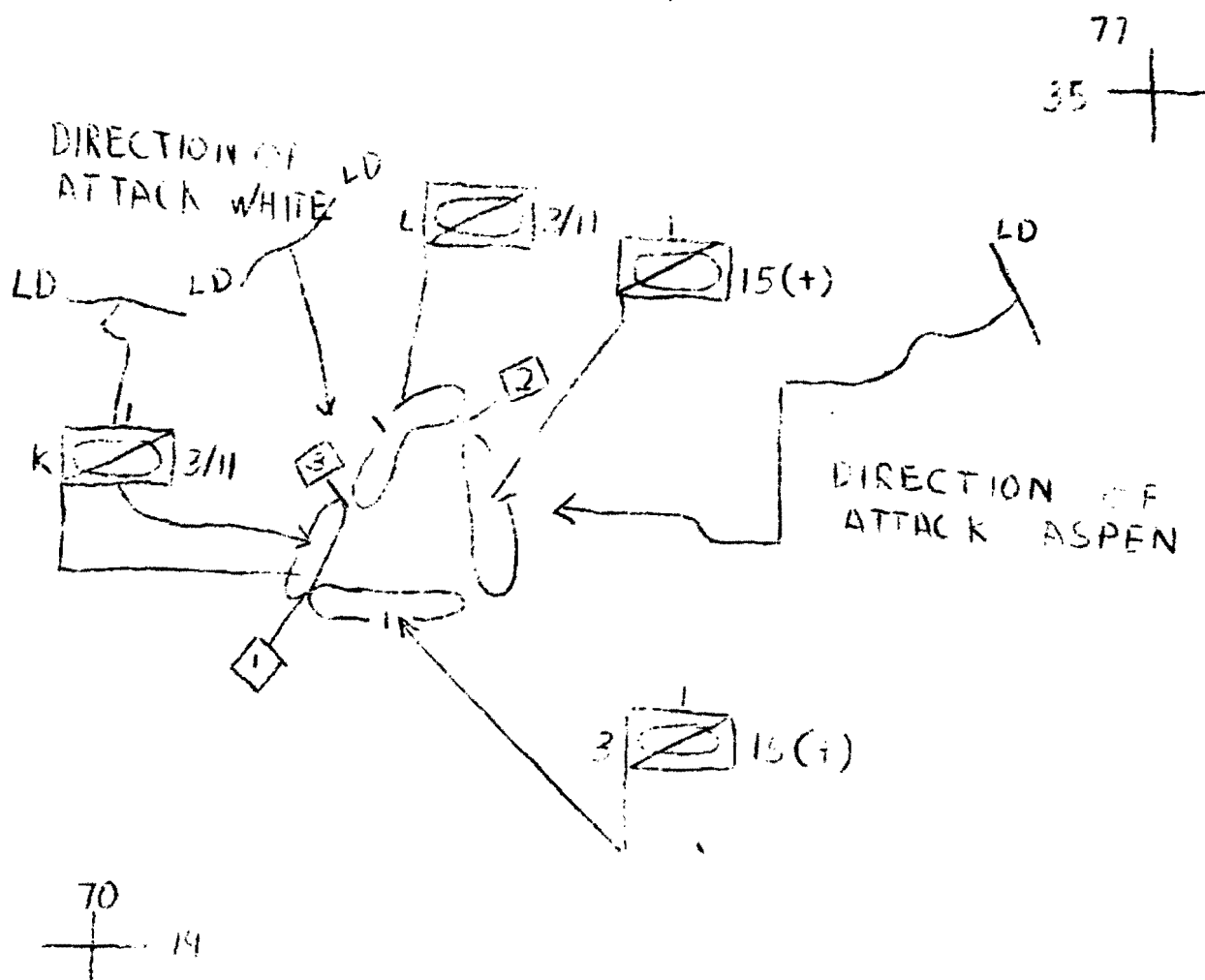
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INCLOSURE 2 (Copy of 0
Map Ref: VIETNAM, 1:50,

Overlay to OPORD 21-26, 3/11ACR)
LOC sheet; series 6332III



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