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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
28TH MILITARY HISTORY DETACHMENT  
11TH ARMORED CAVALRY REGIMENT  
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96257

AVIC-WE

27 February 70

SUBJECT: Combat After Action Interview Report

THRU: Commanding General  
United States Army, Vietnam  
ATTN: O. C. M. H.  
Washington, D. C. 20315

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material -  
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1. NAME AND TYPE OF OPERATION: An enemy initiated action against Rome Plow operations in TAY NINH Province during Operation KENTUCKY COUGAR.
2. DATE OF BATTLE: 7 February 1970.
3. LOCATION: Reference Map Series L7014, Sheet 6232 II, TAY NINH Province.
4. PERSONS BEING INTERVIEWED: Lieutenant Colonel James B. Reed, First Squadron Commander, 11th ACR, Captain John B. Poindexter, Commander of A Troop, First Squadron, and others mentioned by name in the narrative.
5. TASK ORGANIZATION: (Team A) A Troop, First Squadron, 11th ACR; A Company, 2/8th Cavalry; and 10 Rome Plows from the 501st Engineer Company.
6. SUPPORTING FORCES: Artillery support came from organic howitzers located at the First Squadron Command Post at FSB CINDY. Two eight-inch pieces were also there, under the operational control of First Squadron, and supported. Light Fire Teams and Blue Max came from First Cavalry Division elements at TAY NINH.
7. INTERVIEWING SPECIALIST: Enlisted personnel of the 28th Military History Detachment.
8. MISSION: Team A's mission was cutting a swath across the NVA/ VC infiltration routes running north and south in War Zone "C". The Rome Plows cut, burned and removed an east-west belt two hundred meters wide.

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9. EXECUTION: On 7 February 1970, at 1500 hours, the Rome Plows were in echelon left formation, cutting east. A Troop's Third Platoon was on the north flank of the Rome Plows in column formation; the First Platoon of A Troop was in column formation on the south flank. The infantry was mounted on the tracks. The headquarters element of A Troop was initially with the Third Platoon.

At 1515 hours, the formation neared XT 398888 and was instructed to turn ninety degrees south. The lead elements turned and had proceeded about 40 meters when the rear of the column (still headed east into the turn) received small-arms, automatic weapons and RPG fire from well-camouflaged positions in the thick brush. (See Inclosure 1).

The First Platoon immediately made a right flank (turning south) and on command returned fire. Within thirty seconds the head of the column received grenade, RPG and rifle fire from three directions. The vehicles A-66 (Commander's track), HQ-81 (medic track), How 22 (F. O. ) and A-38 were ordered forward to protect the Rome Plows which had halted in place. The infantry dismounted and formed on line to the rear of the tracks. The tracks were ordered off the cleared area and into the brush so that wounded personnel and the Rome Plows could move to the rear where the medivac pad was being prepared.

"There are two schools of thought on that," LTC Reed remarked afterwards. "One, in a contact, Rome Plows should raise blades and assault. The other is that they should get behind the ACAV's. CPT Smith (Rome Plow Commander) is of the second school. Although radios have been ordered for all Rome Plows, during the contact only key plows had radios. The drivers moved their vehicles to the rear, got out of them and hid underneath them. When the Second Platoon arrived to escort them, they had to round the drivers up."

The initial reorganization lasted perhaps 30 to 40 minutes, and included straightening out the line on an east-west axis, evacuating the remainder of the wounded, and pushing the perimeter north to secure the medivac pad. The Third Platoon secured the rear area and the east flank. The Second Platoon arrived to escort the Rome Plows to their NDP at FSB RONDA, and the First Platoon, on line, prepared to assault toward the south.

After directing suppressive fire into the area, the assault commenced with two Sheridans and five ACAV's from the First Platoon, and the Commander's track in center (A-66). The infantry formed on their rear.

NVA soldiers still willing to fight occupied well fortified bunkers not more than eight feet into the jungle wall. The First Platoon continued to move slowly, but steadily ahead. Although many enemy soldiers were killed, others hid in the bottom of bunkers and waited for the tracks to pass over.

The Troop Commander's vehicle rolled over four NVA soldiers who were lying on the ground. A vehicle crushed a bunker; a NVA soldier was hiding inside. Waving off the infantry who were using fragmentation grenades on

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bunkers to the rear, the Troop Commander made an attempt to capture the enemy soldier. The soldier offered to surrender, but a grenade was thrown from the entrance of the bunker. The personnel from the Commander's vehicle remounted and began tossing grenades into the bunker while the infantry fired from the side of the vehicle. The resistance ceased after a short period, and the advance continued for another 30 to 40 meters with moderate return fire. The assault reached its critical point at 1700 hours when vehicle A-16 was hit in the side by an RPG-7. The round wounded one man seriously and two men lightly. The Troop Commander responded to the call for aid and covered the right flank of A-16. As the Commander's vehicle moved into the brush, an RPG grenadier preparing to fire was observed. The enemy was killed by pistol fire and his bunker was destroyed.

The Sheridans proved most effective in blasting the enemy. The infantry reported A-17 killed seven enemy with one main gun round. Since the jungle was so dense that a HE round would have exploded at the end of the barrel, the Sheridans used cannister rounds, which cleared an area of ten to fifteen meters.

LTC Reed alternated command and control with his S-3, Major James L. Abrahamson. When the contact began, LTC Reed directed artillery fires (located at his Squadron CP) to the most likely escape routes. He needed only two adjustments to begin "walking" the artillery across the stream bed running north to south. The stream bed was northeast of the bunker complex. He then directed the artillery fires to a north - south trail which ran along the eastern edge of the bunkers. A Light Fire Team accompanied his command and control ship, and LTC Reed had them "work-out" on the southern edge of the bunkers. He requested Blue Max and further Apache Teams (Light and Heavy Fire Teams), but since they came from TAY NINH, their reaction time is thirty minutes. When the Blue Max aerial-rocket artillery came on station, he adjusted it along the southern edge of the bunker complex, where the trail zig-zagged before continuing southward.

Thus A Troop assaulted from the north, and held the west, artillery blocked the east, and the Blue Max blocked the south.

The attack moved through the entire complex to the south and east with the exceptions of two bunkers, where a suspected Sapper school and a mess hall uncovered the next day were discovered. A brief search disclosed 14 NVN bodies, 3 AK-47's, one crew served machinegun, 1 B-40, 2 SKS, 1 pistol, 100-pounds of clothes, 30 lbs of documents, 40 grenades, 2 mines, 1 82mm booby trap, 6 60 mm mortar rounds, 400-pounds of rice, 8 RPG rounds, 400 rounds of AK-47, and 25 packs. The attack continued until 1730 hours, with Blue Max continuing to "work out" on the escape routes.

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A Troop suffered only nine men wounded, with a Rome Plow and a Sheridan (A-16) damaged. The entire contact took place in an area of 100 by 120 meters, thus making air strikes unnecessary. LTC Reed adjusted the artillery to within 200 meters of his troops throughout the contact. The aerial rocket artillery was adjusted to within 25 meters of the enemy's southern flank, as evidenced by the sweep afterwards. Initially his adjustments caused some dismay to the infantry forces, who are accustomed to having artillery adjusted on the ground — where their position is exactly known. The infantry had seldom worked with absolute command and control from the air.

CPT Poindexter summed up the results with the comment, "It is impossible to command highly enough the courage of the men who continued to press forward against the well-entrenched positions in dense jungle and brush with little visibility. The combination of infantry, Rome Plows, and the Armored Cavalry is a highly effective force for jungle activities."

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