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ANNUAL HISTORICAL SUMMARY
2d Squadron, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment
1 January 1967 to 31 December 1967

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General George S. Patton Jr. once said: "Wars may be fought with weapons, but they are won by men. It is the spirit of the men who follow and the men who lead that gains the victory." This history of the 2d Squadron, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment is an account of cavalrymen, who like their gallant forefathers, carried the battle to the enemy.

January 1967 saw the Eagle Squadron, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Kibbey M. Horne, begin its fifth month in Viet Nam. As the new year commenced, the 2d Squadron was under the operational control of the 173d Airborne Brigade for Operation DUCK (1-5 January 1967). The Squadron secured a portion of Highway 15, which runs between Vung Tau and Bien Hoa, while elements of the US 9th Infantry Division passed through. Local platoon-sized reconnaissance missions were conducted within the Squadron area of operation to keep the enemy off balance and reduce his influence in the area. No significant contact was made and on 5 January 1967, the operation was terminated with the Squadron remaining in sector along Highway 15 to prepare for future operations.

Operation CEDAR FALLS (8-24 January 1967) began as the Squadron moved north to a forward assembly area at Phu Loi on 8 January. On 9 January the Squadron attacked to secure a bridgehead at Ben Cat and bivouac areas in the new area of operation. With accomplishment of its initial mission, the Squadron conducted daily reconnaissance-in-force operations in addition to providing security for engineer work parties. "Charlie" confined his activities to sniping and harassing fire with automatic weapons even though persistent cavalrymen continued to find rich caches of rice and hidden tunnels. In this war the soldier is only limited by his imagination. One ingenious trooper discovered that Viet Cong rice caches could be located by watching where flocks of birds landed. On 24 January the Squadron returned to Blackhorse.

During the period 27-31 January the Squadron participated in Operation MUNCIE. This operation was conducted in conjunction with the 1st Battalion, 43rd Infantry (ARVN) which consisted of three rifle companies and a headquarters company. The Squadron, with one rifle company attached to each reconnaissance troop, conducted sweeps through the Blackhorse tactical area of responsibility destroying several enemy base camps and capturing numerous items of Viet Cong equipment. On 29 January, G Troop engaged an enemy platoon and killed nine Viet Cong in an engagement that lasted fifteen minutes. Realizing they were losing the fight the Viet Cong broke contact and faded into the jungle. No further contact was experienced and the operation terminated on 31 January.

In February, Lieutenant Colonel Benjamin F. Harmon assumed command of the Squadron. Operation KITTY-HAWK was initiated and the Squadron became responsible for securing a portion of the Regimental base Camp perimeter and the Gia Ray quarry site. Additionally, the Squadron escorted resupply convoys between Long Binh and Blackhorse and conducted troop-size sweeps in the Regimental tactical area of responsibility. On February 18, 2d Squadron assumed operational control of Blackhorse and the Regimental tactical area of responsibility.

Several reconnaissance-in-force missions were conducted during this period, however, no enemy contact was made. Operating from Blackhorse had its advantages as those units not actively engaged in a tactical mission were able to perform much needed construction in the Squadron area.

February, with its cool nights and almost unceasing wind, passed away and the Squadron continued its KITTY HAWK mission well into March. On 20 March 1967 Operation JUNCTION CITY II began and the Squadron moved from the dust bowl it called home to the city of An Loc where it came under the operational control of the 2d Brigade, 1st Infantry Division. The Squadron attacked on 21 and 22 March to seize objectives in War Zone C. Only squad-size enemy contact was made as the Squadron seized its objectives and established a fire support base. Daily reconnaissance missions were launched from that base as "Charlie" was hunted in his own back yard. On 23 March, Platoon Sergeant John M. Keator led his platoon of tanks out of the newly established base on a routine reconnaissance mission. It was hot that day and the fact that the platoon had to chop and push its way through the dense jungle that characterized Tay Ninh Province didn't help the situation. As the tanks continued to thrash forward on their mission "Charlie" watched from the hiding places he knew so well.

The Viet Cong outnumbered the American force and they were confident of what was to come as they waited in silence with their recoilless rifles and automatic weapons. Sergeant Keator led his force forward unaware of the ambush that was closing about him. Exactly according to his well rehearsed plan, "Charlie" opened up with his automatic weapons. Two antitank rounds streaked through the air and slammed into the fuel tank and engine compartment of Sergeant Keator's tank causing it to burst into flame. Sergeant Keator grabbed a portable fire extinguisher as the tank moved forward into the jaws of the ambush. The engine died and the tank was ringed in fire but its 90mm cannon miraculously was unharmed. With deadly authority the 90mm spewed forth its steel, first at the recoilless rifle and then into the thicket from which the automatic weapons fire had come. Eight enemy soldiers died. By this time the tank was completely engulfed in flame and Sergeant Keator ordered his crew to abandon the tank while he covered their exit with suppressive fire from his caliber 50 machinegun. Once his crew had safely reached another tank, Sergeant Keator jumped from his flaming vehicle and ran to another one nearby. Resuming command, he led his gallant force in an assault which completely routed the enemy. For his exceptional courage sergeant Keator was awarded the Silver Star.

On 28 March, 2d Squadron reverted to the control of the 1st Brigade, 9th Infantry Division for a one day operation in which no contact was made. Subsequently, the Squadron, once again under the control of the 1st Infantry Division, secured Highway 13 from An Loc to Lai Khe as well as three fire support bases. Viet Cong probes against these fire support bases were ineffective. JUNCTION CITY II continued into April, however, the Eagle Squadron was released from the 1st Infantry Division and returned to the control of the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment. Working with the Regiment, 2d Squadron cleared and secured Route 13 in sector, secured support bases, and conducted reconnaissance-in-force operations in their area of operation. On 12 April, Troop G opened Provincial Route 245 to permit passage of the 173rd Airborne Brigade and on 13 April the Squadron was released from JUNCTION CITY II, returning to Blackhorse base camp the same day.

At Blackhorse the Squadron began preparations for sea-movement to I Corps Tactical Zone. On 20 April, the Squadron advance party was airlifted north to Chu Lai while the remainder of the Squadron moved to embarkation ports at Saigon and Newport. During the period 24 to 27 April the Squadron closed Chu Lai and established a base camp there under attachment to the 196th Light Infantry Brigade of Task Force Oregon. With Troops E and F and Howitzer Battery detached the Squadron assumed a ready-reaction force mission during the period 26 to 29 April. The Squadron (-) moved on 30 April to conduct reconnaissance-in-force operations in an area southeast of Chu Lai, however, no contact was made with the enemy.

The first major operation that the Eagle Squadron participated in, in its new area, was in conjunction with the Republic of Korea Marine Corps during 4 thru 9 May. The Squadron established blocking positions along the US/ROK Marine boundary and conducted reconnaissance operations in the area but failed to locate any enemy forces.

The second major operation, THUNDER DRAGON, commenced on 17 May. Along with the ROK Marines the Squadron continued reconnaissance-in-force operations and occupied selected blocking positions in the area of operation. About midday on 20 April, E Troop was approaching a small village when it began receiving heavy automatic weapons fire and rifle grenades. It was during this action that Private First Class Joseph P. Tamboia first experienced the taste of combat. Private First Class Tamboia was a medic assigned to E Troop when the initial burst of enemy fire wounded several men in his platoon. With complete disregard for his own safety Private Tamboia left the safety of his armored vehicle and ran to the aid of his stricken comrades. He repeatedly exposed himself to intense enemy fire as he moved to treat the wounded. As the enemy fire increased in volume, Private Tamboia noticed that the machine gunner, who had been providing suppressive fire for friendly forces, was wounded. Without hesitation, Private First Class Tamboia grabbed the machine gun and fired at the insurgent position from which the accurate enemy fire came until it was silenced. Troop E, crushing the enemy resistance, continued on its mission and later in the day it again received heavy fire from another enemy emplacement. Another cavalryman was wounded and Private First Class Tamboia again moved unfalteringly through a hail of bullets to render aid. Private First Class Tamboia was awarded the Silver Star for his gallant actions.

Another significant action occurred on 22 May 1967 as elements of the 2d Squadron approached a village south of Chu Lai. The well-intrenched Viet Cong waited until the American force was at point-blank range before they opened fire with automatic weapons and grenades. Assaulting immediately, the US troopers captured three trenches on the northern edge of town. With the village encircled by other elements of the Squadron, air strikes and artillery were concentrated on the area. After the smoke had cleared, a search of the village revealed seven trenches and fifty bunkers destroyed. Fifteen tons of rice were destroyed and ten of the enemy were killed in action.

Three days later a forward fire base came under an unexpected mortar attack. Sergeant Wendle C. Davis, a mortarman with F Troop, left his position of safety inside an armored personnel carrier and rushed through the incoming mortar

fire to his own mortar position. He immediately began to fire rounds toward suspected enemy positions. Sergeant Davis' exceptional example spurred other mortarmen to join him. Upon ascertaining that he had a well-organized crew returning the enemy fire, Sergeant Davis ran across an open area to man a caliber 50 machinegun with which to place fire against enemy small arms positions that were supplementing the enemy mortar fire. In the process he was mortally wounded.

Captain Donald A. Burns, commanding F Troop, received word of the enemy attack on the fire base and rushed his force to the scene of the battle. Once in the battle area, Captain Burns stood on top of his personnel carrier in order to direct his forces against the enemy. Destroying the enemy forces closest to the beleaguered camp, F Troop continued the attack to destroy any enemy forces still remaining in the area. Nearing the base of a hill not far from the small American camp, F Troop once again came under heavy enemy fire. Without delay Captain Burns deployed his troop and routed the enemy. During the battle Captain Burns continually exposed himself to enemy fire in order to call in artillery and rally his troops. His daring effort was an example to his men and contributed substantially to the success of the mission. Captain Burns and Sergeant Davis were awarded the Silver Star for this action which resulted in thirty-five enemy soldiers killed. This battle saw the termination of operation THUNDER DRAGON and for the remainder of May and the early part of June the Squadron performed much needed maintenance on its equipment and in unit areas.

On 19 June the Squadron was given the mission to move into an area which had been a long time Viet Cong stronghold. As suspected, the area was heavily mined and the Squadron lost one tank and two armored cavalry assault vehicles (ACAV) as it was restricted to a single route into the area. The Viet Cong withdrew into the mountains without choosing to fight but they left behind numerous mines, bunkers and booby-traps. No further contact was made during the month of June.

During the month of July the Squadron participated in one major operation, "Operation LION", which extended from the 4th thru the 9th. The Squadron conducted this operation with E Troop, H Company (minus one platoon), and 1 Platoon from C Company, 4/31st Infantry. Moving on 4 July at 0700 from the Base Camp located at Chu Lai to Phuoc Thien, the Squadron secured a Landing Zone for C/4/31 Infantry. After all task force elements were united, they moved out into Area of Operation LION for a reconnaissance-in-force mission. E Troop was used as the sweeping element while H Company was used mainly as a heavy fire support element. The Infantry worked in conjunction with E Troop as they were conducting dismounted patrols into suspected enemy villages and with H Company to provide close in security for the company's tanks.

The major enemy contact of Operation LION came on 6 July. After an air strike on the village of Nam Yen, where numerous snipers had been reported, the task force elements surrounded the area and commenced a search of the village. Twelve Viet Cong were killed and one POW was apprehended as they tried to escape. Enemy documents were also captured which provided valuable information concerning the Viet Cong tactics in the local district.

During the remainder of the operation very little contact was made with the enemy although several mines, caves, and tunnels were found which were destroyed. The enemy left sniper units behind to harass the task force elements, but these snipers were either killed or forced from the area under relentless pressure from the elements of the Eagle Squadron.

In August the 2d Squadron participated in two operations in the I Corps Area. On the 1st of August the Squadron, consisting of E Troop, F Troop and H Company (-), departed Chu Lai enroute to the Song Tra Bong river to participate in a multi-unit operation known as "Hood River". From the beginning, the Viet Cong used their mines and snipers to the fullest. As the first day ended, the enemy had disabled three tanks. Retaliation was impossible because the Viet Cong did not elect to make a stand, rather, they withdrew into their secret redoubts, striking only when they were certain of success.

The primary mission for the 2d Squadron was to safeguard and keep open the road to supply Fire Support Base Panther. Since there was only one route into the base, the confident enemy found it easy to attack the security elements which had the mission of keeping the road clear 24 hours a day. The securing of the road was accomplished by mobile patrols which used tanks and Armored Cavalry Assault Vehicles. By the 6th of August the Viet Cong had been denied easy access to the road area and the convoys could move without being harassed. On the 9th of August the operation terminated at 2000 hours after the Squadron escorted the 3d Battalion, 18th Artillery from Panther to Chu Lai.

After a brief maintenance break, the second major operation, BENTON, commenced on 12 August. The main mission was to secure the squadron portion of the Chu Lai Defense Command perimeter and assume responsibility for the 1/14th Infantry and 2/1st Infantry tactical area of responsibility where patrols and reconnaissance-in-force operations had to be conducted. Enemy contact during this operation was limited to one squad size ambush and one isolated sniping incident. On 24 August Lieutenant Colonel Garland R. McSpadden assumed command of the Eagle Squadron and on 31 August operation BENTON terminated.

During 1-12 September, Troops G and F were under the operational control of infantry battalions of the 196th Light Infantry Brigade while platoons from H Company and E Troop performed various missions for other brigade elements. On 12 September the Squadron moved north from Chu Lai to Tam Ky to participate in Operation GOLDEN ROSE. This was the first opportunity the Eagle Squadron had to work as a unit and it was during this operation that the enemy gained his first real taste of what a Cavalry Squadron could do.

For this operation the Squadron was minus one platoon from E Troop but received operational control of A Troop, 17th Cavalry, 101st Airborne Brigade. The Squadron mission was, "Secure the 9th Engineer Battalion (USMC) work parties along Highway 1 and be prepared to relieve the 5th US Marines in the Tam Ky area."

The Squadron moved north of Tam Ky to Hill 29 to establish an operational base secured by G Troop, H Company, Howitzer Battery, and Headquarters Troop (-). F Troop moved north of Hill 29 to Hill 10 to secure C Company, 9th Engineers (USMC) while E Troop and A Troop secured the forward support base

and Province Headquarters at Tam Ky. With these bases established the Squadron began to conduct reconnaissance-in-force missions toward the mountains to the West and along the great sandy area between Highway I and the South China Sea on the East. Although there were many rice paddies throughout the area of operation they did very little to slow the movement of the Squadron's armored vehicles. Rolling hills and numerous open areas provided a marked advantage to the mobility and long range fire-power of the cavalry. This was an advantage the North Vietnamese Army units in the area underestimated.

Little contact was made with enemy forces until Sunday, 24 September when F Troop, on a special area sweep, surprised a North Vietnamese Army reconnaissance company northwest of Hill 29 at a village called Quy My. The enemy, in their well entrenched positions, had no route of escape so they elected to fight to the last man from the hedgerows and stone houses which provided natural fortification for the village. F Troop was joined by G Troop and with the support of Howitzer Battery the stage was set for the violence of an armored attack.

It was not only concentrated fire-power that the enemy had to contend with but the exceptional gallantry displayed by members of the Squadron. Lieutenant Colonel Garland R. McSpadden, with complete disregard for his own safety, hovered above the embattled area in his unarmed command and control helicopter where he could better direct the movements of the ground elements who had become decisively engaged. At night fall Lieutenant Colonel McSpadden landed and spent the night with his troops on the ground as the battle continued with harassing enemy fire and mortar attacks. Captain William W. Crouch, F Troop, and Captain Jon D. Collins, G Troop, deployed their elements with professional skill, disregarding their own safety, to overcome the enemy. For extraordinary heroism these leaders were awarded the Silver Star.

Courage was also displayed by Captain Roderick C. Heath, Squadron Aviation Section Leader, who flew his observation helicopter at altitudes which were in easy reach of hostile fire. Ignoring his own safety, he continually flew his aircraft at low altitudes over the scene of the battle to enable the Squadron Commander to closely coordinate friendly fire. For his bravery, Captain Heath received the Distinguished Flying Cross.

The Nation's second highest award for heroism was particularly appropriate for Specialist Four Joseph M. Thomas who, at the cost of his life, went to the aid of three wounded comrades. With bullets striking all around him, he remained in the open to treat the casualties and move them to safety. Upon receiving intense fire from an enemy bunker, Specialist Thomas stood up in the midst of the firefight and fearlessly assaulted the enemy bunker alone. Firing lethal bursts as he ran into the face of the enemy weapons, he reached the fortification and destroyed it with grenades and rifle fire, killing three enemy soldiers. It was this gallant action that merited Specialist Thomas the Distinguished Service Cross.

On 28 September, the NVA again felt the wrath of the 2d Squadron. As Major Philip Larkin, Squadron S-3, and Captain Heath were conducting an aerial observation mission for a sweep force consisting of G Troop and H Company, they spotted 30 trees moving west, a closer look revealed the trees to be 30 NVA in green uniforms with camouflage tied to their backs. Immediately,

artillery and 90mm tank fire were directed upon the enemy. As the enemy fled west, H Company gave chase in what was termed to be a classic armor movement-- tanks on line. With such a force in pursuit, the enemy commander lost control of his troops and 28 of them were killed, 3 were taken prisoner. It was in this action that Captain John A. Kerr, squadron aviator, displayed heroism while in aerial flight. When he detected several enemy fleeing from the on coming tanks, Captain Kerr flew his unarmed OH-23G command and control helicopter into their path and with fire from his passenger's personal weapon diverted them toward the pursuing armored vehicles. One lone enemy broke from the group and continued to flee. Captain Kerr made an extremely low pass of 20 feet over the insurgent, forcing him to the ground. He held the enemy soldier in that position, by hovering directly over him, until ground forces apprehended the soldier. For his heroic actions and highly competent flying ability, Captain Kerr was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

The 2nd Squadron continued Operation GOLDEN ROSE until it was relieved by 1st Squadron, 1st Cavalry on 13 October. On 12 October, the first elements of the Squadron moved to Chu Lai to prepare for return to Blackhorse Base Camp. The move was again conducted by Navy LST with the advance party traveling to Blackhorse by C130 aircraft. The Squadron closed Blackhorse Base Camp on 23 October after conducting 5 troop-sized tactical road marches from the Long Binh staging area near Saigon.

2nd Squadron had experienced a major personnel turnover while it was at Chu Lai, therefore, a comprehensive training program was conducted by each troop as an introduction to movement in jungle terrain.

During the period 24 October to 31 October the Squadron conducted troop-sized missions in conjunction with operation KITTY HAWK. A major effort was also made to rebuild the Squadron base camp area which had deteriorated considerably during the months the Squadron was up north.

Operation KITTY HAWK was 2nd Squadron's main mission throughout the month of November. Escorts were provided for nightly convoys between Blackhorse and Long Binh and security was provided for engineer work parties in the area. No substantial contact was made with the enemy other than harassment from snipers and mining incidents.

Second Squadron was released from operation KITTY HAWK on 4 December and on 6 December the squadron moved from Blackhorse Base Camp up Highway 13 to a road which ran between Ben Cat and Phuoc Vinh. Its mission was to secure the road, in conjunction with 1st Squadron, to enable elements of the 101st Airborne Division to move into their new base camp at Phuoc Vinh. During this operation, which was named QUICKSILVER, eight Troop-size and four platoon-size reconnaissance operations were conducted in the areas adjacent to the road being secured. Although these operations did not result in enemy contact, they denied the enemy freedom of movement and limited his access to the area. On 21 December, the 2d Squadron terminated Operation QUICKSILVER and moved farther north to Loc Ninh to participate in Operation FARGO. Second Squadron was welcomed into its new area of operation by a mortar attack the night after arrival at Loc Ninh. This was a good indication that hunting was going to be good in an area that had been a long time Communist stronghold. Upon arrival

in the Loc Ninh area, the Squadron prepared its defensive positions and conducted troop-size security and reconnaissance missions until 28 December. A major Squadron-sized ~~reconnaissance~~-in-force operation was conducted on 29-30 December. The enemy avoided all contact with the Squadron. He decided to wait in hopes that he could fight the 11th Armored Cavalry on his terms.