

RG 472
11th ACR Org Hist
LC-71
Box 3

ENCL 1

919th Engineer Company (Assault)
1 January 1968-31 December 1968

4 April 1969
Approved

Bernard J. Reilly

BERNARD J. REILLY
CPT, CE
Commanding

FORWARD

The years 1966 and 1967 were important ones to the 919th Engineer Company (Armored). During this period, the unit was activated, trained and deployed to Vietnam where they gained experience, began building an impressive record of achievements, and provided effective armored engineer support to the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment. 1968 was no exception for the hard working "Red Devils". The increased hostilities initiated by the Viet Cong's abortive TET Offensive of late January and early February 1968 and the ensuing actions of a beleaguered enemy throughout the year could not stop the unit from continuing its mission. Relying on past experience, expert leadership, and the valiant efforts of its men, the unit was able to insure that its task was carried out under all conditions.

With a change of TOE structure from 5-7D to 5-157G in October 1968, the unit increased its capabilities and potential to provide armored engineer support to the 11th ACR. The additional men and equipment widened the scope of operations that the unit could undertake.

Being the only unit of its type in Vietnam has placed the 919th Engineers in the prestigious position of writing the book on the operation of an armored engineer company in a counter-insurgency type environment. In addition, the Army has used the unit as a proving ground to check the effectiveness of new items of equipment.

The unit has covered the depth and breadth of III CTZ during the past year, participating in all major tactical operations conducted by the Regiment. The unit experienced many successes and achievements along with the many problems inherent to combat operations. They were frequently called upon to render assistance with their wide array of armament during combat operations. Their effectiveness as engineers first and cavalrymen second was put to the test upon many occasions with a high degree of successful missions to their credit and a low percentage of resultant casualties.

Through the diligent efforts of each member of the unit, another proud page can be added to the history of the 919th Engineer Company (Armored).

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The beginning days of the new year, 1968, found the 919th Engineer Company (Armored) on Operation Farge with the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment. The company's forward CP was set up in the middle of a large rubber plantation adjacent to the Loc Ninh Special Forces Camp at XU737034. The missions of the company were to keep National Highway 13 clear of enemy mines each day and to continue to improve the Regimental Leager Positions. The 1st, 2nd and 3rd Platoons combined their efforts on the clearing mission utilizing their organic armored vehicles and mine sweep teams to clear 24,000 meters of road each day. Defensive bunkers, helicopter revetments and perimeter defensive wire and earth berms were emplaced by the unit.

| <u>Construction Effort</u> | | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------|-------------|------------------|
| <u>Location</u> | <u>Mission</u> | <u>Size</u> | <u>Method</u> |
| 1. XU8012 | LZ (CH34) | 200'x200' | chain saw-demo |
| 2. XU228634 | CP | 4 acres | rome plow |
| 3. XU8012 | CP | 3 acres | M48A3 tank dozer |
| 4. XT686999 | CP | 4 acres | rome plow |
| 5. XT684996 | Fields of Fire | 1000'x1000' | chain saw |
| 6. XT835362 | Fields of Fire | 4 acres | tank dozer |
| 7. XU737084 | Aircraft revetments | six | m8A1 |
| 8. XU7308 | Earth berm | 10'x5000m | D7s |
| 9. XU727029 | Laterite Pit | 10,000 yds. | excavation |
| 10. XU762907- XU734073 | Jungle clearing | 950 acres | rome plow |
| 11. XU7308 | Bunkers | 10'x10'x8' | sandbags-lumber |
| 12. XU7308 | Triple standard | 4000m. | Engr. plat. |
| 13. XU7308 | concertina | | |
| | Peneprine | 1,200 gal. | Org. equip. |
| 14. Mines-see Annex A | | | |

Early on the morning of 28 January 1968 the Regiment received a warning order to prepare for a move to Bien Hoa/Saigon RVN, to help counter an expected enemy attack on the major installations in the area. Little was known of the size or ferocity of the enemies' impending attack. All gear was packed and a road march of 12 hours was conducted to get to the new location. The unit arrived at their defensive positions under a hail of enemy rocket and mortar attacks and automatic weapons fire. The Regiment Headquarters set up adjacent to II Field Force Headquarters while the 1st and 2nd Squadrons deployed their units to Ton Son Nhut AFB, Lai Khe and Quan Loi. The 3rd Squadron set up defensive positions at III Corps ARVN Headquarters, the POW camp near Long Binh and an area near Bien Hoa with the 101st Airborne Infantry Division. The 919th Engineer Co. (Armored) detached its Platoons in support

of their respective squadrons. The resultant TET Offensive, a large-scale, coordinated attack upon installations and population centers throughout South Vietnam, was a completely new tactic of the enemy. The 919th Engineers participated with the Regiment in its successful defense and counter-attack upon the enemy. For their actions, the unit was awarded the Presidential Valorous Unit Citation as an assigned unit of the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment. In addition, eight personnel received the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry.

For a six-day period, the tactical situation was acute. Elements were shifted from area to area routing the enemy. On 29 Jan 68, the company CP and 1st Platoon moved to WIDOWS VILLAGE, an area directly across from II Field Force Headquarters on National Highway 1. They quickly employed 3,000 meters of triple standard concertina wire to provide defensive wires for Regimental Headquarters Night Defensive Positions and for elements of the 1st Squadron.

The 3rd Squadron remained OPCON to the 2nd Squadron, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment in an area north of Bien Hoa along the Dong Nai River and the 2nd Platoon destroyed 50 enemy fortifications in conjunction with the operation. With a new phase of Viet Cong terror menacing III CTZ, the Allies countered by stepping up their tactics in an effort to halt the enemy from making another large attack. Operation QUYET THANG was designed to more effectively engage the enemy and provide protection for the civilian population. In a combined effort, all commands in III CTZ set up blocking forces providing a ring around Saigon to the Cambodian Border, and then conducted reconnaissance in force operations. The 919th Engineer Company (Armored) participated and played an important role in the successful outcome of the operation. The Company CP remained at Bien Hoa with Regimental Headquarters.

The first platoon returned to Base Camp to support the 1st Squadron on 3 Mar 68. They found and destroyed seven anti-tank mines on National Highway #2 between Xuan Loc and Blackhorse. The platoon emplaced a 60"x40' culvert at XS437915 and continued to improve Blackhorse Base Camp by giving technical advice and assistance to the 1st Squadron.

On 3 Mar 68, the 2nd Platoon road-marched with the 3rd Squadron, 11th ACR, through Saigon and set up a Squadron laager position near Duc Hoa. Working with 25th ARVN Division for a period of 42-days, the Squadron successfully stopped two regiments of VC/NVA from entering Saigon. At the end of the operation, over 500 enemy had been killed. The 2nd Platoon participated in each of the reconnaissance in force operations, and destroyed over 1,500 enemy fortifications. The 3rd Platoon continued to provide engineer support to the 2nd Squadron, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, in the "Iron Triangle". They searched and destroyed over one-hundred bunkers and

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115 feet of tunnel complexes. On 17 March 1968, the 3rd Platoon supervised one of the largest river crossings in Vietnam. Using LCM "Mile" boats and class 60 tactical rafts, the platoon crossed over 150 vehicles on the Dong Nai River.

A high degree of enemy movement of supplies and material was detected by intelligence channels in the northern III CTZ near the Cambodian Border. A suspected VC/NVA road network had been sighted by Air Force reconnaissance aircraft. On the 15th of April, Regimental Headquarters, 1st and 2nd Squadrons, and the 919th Engineer Company moved into the Bong Song - Song Be Area of III CTZ with the mission of locating this suspected road network and supply storage area. A 23-hour road march brought the units to their first NDP at Bernard Special Forces Camp. The move involved a great engineer effort as most of the area had not been travelled in 15 years. After a complete reconnaissance by air and photo-interpretation of the route, it was decided that the move could be accomplished, although the road had numerous craters and many destroyed bridges along the route. There also remained the possibility of enemy mines and booby traps. The 2nd Platoon joined the lead elements at midnight on the 14th of March, sweeping the road from Blackhorse by the lights of their vehicles.

The march was uneventful until they reached Phuoc Vinh. There a concrete bridge had been destroyed. A bypass was constructed, using the Bull Dozer D7-E. The surrounding country became more desolate as the units continued to advance. 1st and 2nd Platoons prepared launching sites for two AVLB's using their organic M48A3 tank dozer. By the time the elements reached their first NDP, 130 miles had been travelled over a route that had not seen use in a decade.

After setting up defensive positions along the route, the Regiment conducted reconnaissance in force operations to locate and destroy enemy supply areas and interdict the suspected road network. Numerous base camps were encountered in the area, and elements of the 919th Engineers destroyed over 300 enemy fortifications. 1st Platoon moved further north with the 1st Squadron where they constructed 14 additional crossing sites, using their M48A3 tank dozer and AVLB.

After seven days of operation in the area, the operation had to be discontinued as reports were coming in that the Viet Cong were preparing a second offensive on the cities of Vietnam. The 3rd Squadron and 2nd Platoon retraced the route which they had taken and returned to Phu Loi. The 1st Squadron and the 1st Platoon meanwhile entered War Zone D at Don Xoi, continued through the abandoned French camp of Rang Rong, hoping to cross the Dong Nai River and effectively cut off the Viet Cong from the northeast of Long Binh. Although the operation ended before the area could be fully exploited,

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the ability of the 919th Engineers to provide safe and sure access to any corner of III CTZ had once again been proved.

With the shift of Regimental operations back to the Saigon/Bien Hoa area during the first part of May, this unit began to assume a more important role in the war effort. The Viet Cong were again trying to enter Saigon in an effort to cause as much havoc and destruction as possible and to influence recent attempts at peace negotiations. 3rd Squadron became OPCON to the 25th and 9th Infantry Divisions and alternated its area of operations between Cu Chi and National Highway #1, south of Saigon. It was a period of continuous mobility as they did not remain in any location for more than a few days. 2nd Platoon cleared large areas of roadway between Saigon and Tay Ninh City. Working with elements of the 65th Engineers Bn (C) and the 588th Engineer Bn, a daily mine sweep was conducted over the route of 60 kilometers to clear traffic by 1000 hours every day. Eleven enemy mines were detected and destroyed. The MSR was able to handle traffic without fear of interdiction of its logistical convoys. The Platoon continued its constructive efforts to improve night defensive positions.

1st Platoon and elements of the 1st Squadron had an area of operations south of Cu Chi. The platoon emplaced 210 vehicle fighting positions using their organic D7-E dozer and M48A2C tank dozer. The platoon cleared 17,450 meters of road, finding and destroying four anti-tank mines. The platoon provided routes to inaccessible areas by emplacing seven sites for AVLB's. On 25 Jun 68, the 1st Squadron road-marched to the "Iron Triangle" region of III CTZ. The platoon found and destroyed three anti-tank mines. The Platoon continued to operate in the Phuoc Vinh - Lai Khe "Iron Triangle" area to interdict Viet Cong routes of infiltration and locate enemy supply caches. On 7 Jul 68, an ACAV from the 1st Platoon hit a mine while on its way to a night ambush position. There were no casualties. On the 16th of July, the Squadron moved to Loc Ninh to conduct reconnaissance in force operations. 1st Platoon was responsible for preparing night defensive positions to include vehicle fighting positions and barriers of concertina wire. They emplaced 1,900 meters of wire and 270 vehicle fighting positions.

The 3rd Platoon was located at Blackhorse Base Camp and provided direct engineer support to the 2nd Squadron. The priority mission of the platoon was to conduct mine sweep operations between Xuan Loc and Blackhorse. On 15 May 68, the platoon was on a RIF with E Troop, southeast of Base Camp. An

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ACAV from the platoon was fired upon by an entrenched enemy. The anti-tank rocket caused moderate injuries to seven individuals. The resulting firefight and successful outcome was due in part to the platoon's expert reaction to the situation. By laying down an immediate base of fire and keeping the enemy pinned down, men from the other two ACAV's immediately began caring for the wounded while others advanced to rout the enemy. Their cool handling of the situation undoubtedly saved more injuries. While stationed at Base Camp, the platoon rendered advice and assistance to the engineer construction effort.

The 14th of June saw operations in the Michelin Rubber Plantation and Iron Triangle conducted by the 2nd Platoon, which moved out with the 3rd Squadron. The purpose of this operation was to stem the amount of enemy activity in that area. They cleared 3,200 meters of road, prepared two AVLB sites, and located three anti-tank mines.

The 2nd Platoon replaced the 3rd Platoon at Blackhorse on 12 June 1968. They located and destroyed 26 anti-tank mines, constructed 18 20X60 troop billets and two buildings for the Regimental Training School. During the months of June and July, the 1st and 2nd Platoons supported their respective squadrons in the Iron Triangle - Phuoc Vinh - Tan Uyen Area. On a joint operation with the 1st Infantry Division, the Regiment pacified several villages previously dominated by strong Viet Cong infrastructure. The method employed to rout the Viet Cong was to cordon and search each village. This unit's mission, part of a coordinated civil action program, was targetted on winning the hearts and minds of the people which included building schools, dispensaries, improving roads, and bettering farming operations of the villagers. The 919th Engineers constructed three schools, one dispensary, and improved five acres of new rice paddies at Binh My, Binh Co, and Tan Binh.

On 1 August 1968, the 1st Platoon moved back to Blackhorse. While the platoon was at home station, they assumed minesweeping responsibilities for the road between Blackhorse and Xuan Loc. During this period, they located and destroyed seven anti-tank mines. One of the platoon's squads was attached to A Troop for an operation east of Blackhorse. They were engaged in clearing landing zones and bridge sites. They prepared one ford site with explosives on their return to Blackhorse.

On 13 September, the 1st Platoon moved to Phu Loi with the 1st Squadron. They operated there until 18 October when they moved to the vicinity of Normandy I near Bien Hoa. The platoon worked out of various fire support bases

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along Route Zinc and Phu Loi until 14 September when the platoon moved to Tan Son Nhut AFB. The platoon obtained a Combat Engineer Vehicle, as did the 3rd Platoon to replace their tank dozer. The platoon conducted minesweep operations near Phu Loi. On 19 October, a Chinese claymore mine was detonated, resulting in 1 KIA and 2 WIA.

The 3rd Platoon moved to Loc Ninh on 3 August. While at Loc Ninh, the platoon cleared 5,000 square meters of rubber trees. On 8 August, they moved to An Loc to conduct minesweep operations with 1st Engineer Battalion. A 48" culvert and eleven 50'X20' helipad revetments were also constructed. The platoon returned to Loc Ninh on 6 September to clear a 50X100 meter anti-personnel minefield. A flame track was used to burn off the area first and then the CEV with its blade lowered scraped off the mines without casualties. The Platoon returned to Blackhorse on 15 September to continue minesweep operations and the construction effort. The Platoon located 14 mines, installed 5,600 meters of concertina on Route 2, and built an observation bunker on Banana Hill adjacent to Base Camp. The CEV was used to remove a UH-1D helicopter from a gorgo near Cam My.

On 2 October 1968, the 919th Engineer Company underwent a TOE change from 5-7D to MTOE 5-127G. The effectiveness of the unit had been hampered because of the lack of engineer type equipment and personnel trained to operate them. The change basically added more headquarters personnel to include a reconnaissance team, additional maintenance personnel, 3 AVLB's, a CEV section, 3 water supply points, three 10-ton tractors and trailers, four bucket loaders, a road grader, and additional personnel with a full complement of equipment forming another line platoon. The advantages of this change began to be felt immediately as the unit acquired the equipment and personnel.

1st Platoon provided direct support the 1st Squadron. On 1 November, 1st Platoon was located at Tan Son Nhut Air Base with elements of the 1st Squadron and provided general area security. While at Tan Son Nhut, 1st Platoon constructed a mine barrier around the bridge at XT713096. This consisted of three large bunkers, 30-feet long, overhead cover, timber construction, and two 40-foot tunnels that connect the bunker complex. These were destroyed with C-4 demolitions. Returning from the mission, their 2nd Squad track hit a mine in the middle of the column. It was an old mine that could not be sighted and was 20 lbs in size. On 14 November, with A Troop again, the 1st Platoon discovered and destroyed

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a tunnel complex, 30 to 40 tunnels, some running up to 100 meters long from X^t 690113 to X^t 705090. On November 15 the First Platoon moved up to Holiday Inn, with elements of the First Squadron. They were at this location until 16 January when they returned to Blackhorse Basecamp with the First Squadron. While at Holiday Inn, the First Platoon was responsible for clearing the road from Tan Uyen to Holiday Inn and Holiday Inn to Claymore Corners. During this time, they swept approximately 900 kilometers of roadway, clearing the road of mines for convoys eventually going to Phuoc Vinh. They found 8 anti-tank mines and 2 anti-personnel mines during this period of time. The First Platoon constructed 3 observation towers at Binh Co and with help of a dozer from company headquarters, constructed a berm around the village for local defense. They also built a 10 by 8 by 8 hooch for the village chief, and built a road around the perimeter of both Holiday Inn and Binh Co. On 16 January, the First Platoon moved back into Blackhorse Basecamp and assumed the minesweep responsibility to the junction of Routes #1 and #2, with negative results. During the reporting period, the First Platoon had the following casualties: 1 killed in action, 17 wounded in action.

b. 2nd Platoon: The Second Platoon, 919th Engineer Company (Armored) provided direct support for the Third Squadron, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment. On 1 November, the Second Platoon was located at Holiday Inn where they stayed until they moved north to FSB Jim on the 16th. They operated out of FSB Jim until 1 December when they went back to Blackhorse. On 21 November, they found two mines at X^t 906428. One was a slapstick and the other a tilt rod type detonation. They were plastic, 20 pounds and removed for intelligence purposes. On 26 November, the Second Platoon found a basecamp at X^t 959407 consisting of 16 bunkers 6'X6'X4' with 3 feet of overhead cover. They were effectively destroyed using 8 lb. charges on top and blown down. The CEV attached to the Second Platoon cleared fields of fire at the Song Be Bridge and built up Fire Support Bases MOSEBY, HAWK and JIM. On 1 December, the Second Platoon moved back to Blackhorse where they assumed the responsibility of sweeping the road from Blackhorse to the junction of Routes #1 and #2. They were in Blackhorse until 16 January when they moved back to Holiday Inn. While having the minesweep at Blackhorse, there were negative results. The Second Platoon went down to Cam My three separate times and 5 kilometers down the Blackstone trail, all with negative results. While at Home Station the Second Platoon constructed a chapel for the Third Squadron and a Fire Direction Control Bunker for the Third How Battery. They also built a

bunker on top of Banana Hill and a road leading up to it. Since 15 January, the Second Platoon has been at Holiday Inn where they assumed the responsibility of clearing Route 16 from Tan Uyen to Holiday Inn and from there to Claymore Corners. With the help of a D7E Dozer and a grader from Company Headquarters, they began constructing rice paddies at Binh Co by leveling and terracing the area around the local river for a civil action project.

c. Third Platoon: The Third Platoon, 919th Engineer Company (Armored) provided direct support for the Second Squadron 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment. From 1 November to 1 December the Third Platoon was located at Blackhorse Basecamp where they had the primary responsibility for the minesweep Blackhorse to the junction of Routes #1 and #2. There were negative results during this time. When they were in basecamp during this time, the Third Platoon constructed an Adams Hut for the Red Cross girls and nurses of the 7th Surgical Hospital. They also built a 20'X60' conference room for the Second Squadron Headquarters. On 1 December the Third Platoon moved from Blackhorse to Fire Support Base Jim at 11 880397. On 8 December, they constructed a 25 ft. observation tower at FSB Jim. They also installed 6,000 meters of triple standard concertina wire around FSB Jim. From 1 December to the end of 1968, the Third Platoon was responsible for sweeping the road from one kilometer south of Claymore Corners to one kilometer south of the Song Be Bridge site at Phuoc Vinh. They found two mines which were blown in place.