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

AVIC-WE

26 September 1968

SUBJECT: After Action Interview - 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment Riverine Navy.

Office of the Chief of Military History
Department of the Army
Washington 25, D.C.

1. NAME AND TYPE OF ORGANIZATION: I Troop, 3rd Squadron, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment (11th ACR).
2. INCLUSIVE DATES OF OPERATION: 14 September 1968 to date.
3. LOCATION: TAN UYEN Village, TAN UYEN District, BINH HOA Province, RVN, XT969229 east along the SONG DONG NAI River to THUONG PHUOC, CONG THANH District, BIEN HOA Province, YT115236.
4. CONTROL OR COMMAND HEADQUARTERS: 3rd Squadron, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment.
5. PERSONS BEING INTERVIEWED: Cpt John N. Jaeger, CO, I Troop, 3rd Squadron, 11th ACR; 1LT James S. Baker, CO 3rd Platoon, I Troop, 3rd Squadron, 11th ACR; and 1LT Dwight S. Hull II, CO E, 1st Engineers, 1st Bn, 26th Infantry, 1st US Infantry Division.
OFFICER: CPT. WILLIAM B. OVERBAY
6. INTERVIEWING EM: PFC Charles M. Stillman, Historical Assistant, 28th Military History Detachment, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment.
7. TASK ORGANIZATION: I Troop, 3rd Squadron, 11th ACR; Co E, 1st Engineers, 1st Bn, 26th Inf; 1st US Inf Div. (OPCON to I Troop 3rd Squadron, 11th ACR).

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AVIC-WE

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8. SUPPORTING FORCES: Co E, 1st Engineers; 1st Bn, 26th Inf, 1st US Inf Division.

9. BACKGROUND INFORMATION: The SONG DONG NAI River from TAN UYEN to THUONG PHUOC lies across one of the main supply and infiltration routes to the BIEN HOA/SAIGON area from the North. Of special concern is the transport of rockets across or along the River to within range of the BIEN HOA area. These rockets caused great destruction during the TET offensives and pose an increasing threat as rockets become more available to VC/NVA units in the South. The DONG NAI area is dotted with confirmed rocket sites from the TET and May offensives through August to the present. Since May however, the enemy has shifted from launching rockets in scattered areas to a rather concentrated area northeast of TAN UYEN.

The 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment has been in the TAN UYEN area for some time with Task Force Frovette and the Air Cavalry Troop. The following incidents indicate some of the activity on the river: (1) On 1, 8, and 11 September after curfew, elements of the 11th ACR engaged illegal sampan traffic. (2) A PW, Tran Van Reo reported that on 12 September he transported 100 men with 50 kilos of rice across the DONG NAI. (3) On 10 September, Task Force Privette engaged a raft with a large wooden box on it. The raft escaped. (4) On 13 September, the 36th ARVN Ranger Battalion sealed and searched the village of THIEN TAN (YTO718). In addition to a number of VC/NVA KIA's, weapons and supplies, one member of the U-1 Intelligence Section was captured with plans of BIEN HOA Airbase. During this operation, the boats of E Company, 1st Engineers were used to seal the DONG NAI side of the village. All the preceding engagements are indications of the enemy activity in the area.

INTELLIGENCE: On 8 September rockets fired on BIEN HOA originated south of the DONG NAI near TAN PHU. Then on 13 September, 36th ARVN Rangers discovered six 107-mm rockets during the search of THIEN TAN Village. These incidents represent a deviation from the usual tactics: firing rockets from north of the DONG NAI. This deviation may be attributed to increased Allied pressure north of the DONG NAI. Effective patrolling of the river could prevent the enemy from transporting rockets into the southern sections for launching.

Recent intelligence analysis shows increased caching of rockets near the banks of waterways. Water transportation is used wherever possible and launching sites are increasingly within 300-400 meters of the cache sites. The 122-mm rocket is well waterproofed and the enemy will often use submerged caches in marshy areas or along riverbanks. New launching procedures include use of field expedient launchers, delayed fire timing

CONFIDENTIAL

AVIC-WE

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devices, and firing through dense vegetation. The VC/NVA have undoubtedly had to adopt these techniques due to effective allied artillery and increased patrolling. Although potential accuracy is decreased using these techniques, the enemy can transport the rockets to launching areas, set them up for immediate or delayed firing and vacate the area before Allied artillery or patrols can get to the launch sites. The use of field expedient launchers furthermore allows the enemy to withdraw without being encumbered by the heavy reusable launchers.

11. MISSION: I. Primary: To patrol the DONG NAI River and its tributaries between TAN UYEN and THUONG PHUOC, to search out and destroy enemy transport and resupply operations.

II. Secondary: a. To provide ferry service for heavy equipment across the DONG NAI River at TAN UYEN. b. To transport a combat-equipped reaction force of ten troops per boat (30 men total). c. To seal the river side or any cordon and search operations along the DONG NAI.

12. CONCEPT OF THE OPERATION AND EXECUTION: For use as a riverine navy, boats were needed capable of high speed, providing protection for the crew, low target silhouette, and shallow draft. On 27 August, the engineers of the 1/26 Infantry airdropped three boats north of TAN UYEN. These are 27' flat-bottom aluminum boats with twin 90 horsepower inboard motors. The boats draw 3' 10" and have only about 3' above the waterline. Although capable of 30 knots, these craft were designed to assist in bridge building serving as tugs rather than speedboats. There is no armor onboard whatsoever. Although not ideal, they were the boats available for the job.

A crew of three operates the craft in addition to the six who engage the enemy. The armament includes one M-60 machinegun, hand grenades, several LAW's and M'79 grenade launchers in addition to individual M-16's.

On 3 September a 4 pontoon reinforced M4T6 raft was airdropped and assembled at TAN UYEN. Using two of the bridge boats pushing and one as a safety, the raft can carry two ACAV's or one M48A2 tank across the river making the round trip in about twenty minutes. This raft is the only ground means of transporting heavy equipment across the DONG NAI in the immediate area.

Both day and night patrols require two boats for safety and backup reasons. For further security and firepower, six ACAV's are kept as close to the patrol as practicable, usually 2000-3000 meters. Terrain restricts the ACAV's somewhat, but the boats can rely on their low silhouette and great speed to bring them safely to within range of the supporting force when necessary. At present, two national

CONTINUATION

AVIC-WE

26 September 1968

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policemen and an interpreter are taken on the patrols to question and check the papers of any suspects. Patrols are carried out on a 24-hour a day basis if possible. Required maintenance on the boats and limitations on the number of crews available have so far restricted these patrols considerably.

Since the riverine navy was first set up by the 1st Corps of Engineers patrols have been run regularly. So far however, there has been little contact with the enemy. 1Lt Dwight S. Hall II has been with the boats as platoon leader representing the engineers since they were airlifted in on 27 August. He began running patrols in conjunction with dismounted reconnaissance patrols from 1/26th Inf. On 30 August at 1430 hours, the patrol received three RPG rounds and automatic weapons fire from five positions near THUONG PHUOC. The boats withdrew without being hit. When they returned later, there were no signs of the enemy. On 13 September 1Lt Hall and his men participated in the successful cordon and search of THIEN TAN Village mentioned above.

On approximately 14 September 1Lt James S. Baker, 3rd Platoon, I Troop, 3rd Squadron, 11th ACR joined Lt. Hull to take over the armor and tactics aspect of the patrol. At this time the fleet came under control of Blackhorse. At the same time, the 3rd Platoon of I Troop took over on the land patrols with the aid of a scout from Regimental Headquarters.

13. RESULTS: In the short time since the 11th ACR has taken over the riverine navy, there has been no significant activity.

14. ANALYSIS: Since Lt Baker has taken over, two bodies have been recovered from the DONG NAI River. Otherwise, there has been no evidence of the enemy. Nevertheless, Lt Baker is optimistic that the enemy will be found if he is operating in the area. He is fairly confident anyway that there is little or no enemy traffic on or across the DONG NAI River between TAN UYEN and THUONG PHUOC. More time is needed to evaluate the effectiveness of the patrols. The raft-ferry however has already proven itself having carried eight ACAV's across the river on 19 September in under 45 minutes.

Intelligence reports show increased use of the area south of the DONG NAI for launching rocket attacks on BIEN HOA. Six 122-mm rockets were found in the search of THIEN TAN. The riverine navy is well justified in attempts to keep to a minimum the inflow of rockets to the LONG BIEN/BIEN HOA Rocket Belt.

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AVIC-ME
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WILLIAM B OVERBAY
CPT, Armor
Historian

2 Incl

- I. Intelligence Bulletin #20, 1st Infantry Division, with ROCKET STUDY, 16 September 1968, 11th ACR.
2. Intelligence Bulletin #19, 1st Infantry Division, Annex A (11th ACR SUPINTREF 25-68) to 11th ACR INTSUM 259-68, 15 September 1968

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