

RG 476
11th ACR, 53
AAR
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HEADQUARTERS, 1ST SQUADRON
11TH ARMORED CAVALRY REGIMENT
APO San Francisco 96257

DeB

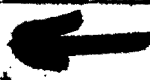
3 February 1967

SUBJECT: Combat Operations After Action Report (RVC: MACV J3-32)


THRU: Commanding Officer
11th Armored Cavalry Regiment
ATTN: S3
APO US Forces 96257

TO: Commander
US Military Assistance Command, VIETNAM
ATTN: J343
APO US Forces 96243

1. NAME OR IDENTITY AND/OR TYPE OF OPERATION:

- a. Operation DAN TAM 81. 
- b. Security of rice harvest.

2. DATES OF OPERATION:

-  a. 160001 Nov 66 - 122400 Jan 67.
- b. US participation: 080830 - 301520 Dec 66.

3. LOCATION: LONG KHANH and BINH TUY Provinces.

4. CONTROL HEADQUARTERS: 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment.

5. REPORTING OFFICER: LTC Martin D. Howell.

6. TASK ORGANIZATION: See Annex A.

7. SUPPORTING FORCES:

- a. Air Support.

(1) Preplanned air strikes.

- (a) On 15 Dec one strike north of the LA NGA River was aborted due to radio failure in the Forward Air Controller's aircraft.
- (b) On 16 Dec one strike was called on a suspected enemy position located at coordinates YT 828480. Negative results were observed.

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Authority *NND 927624*
By *SP-5* NAPA Date *5/8/61*

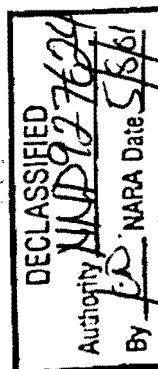
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- (c) On 17 Dec two strikes were called. The first was placed in a suspected enemy base camp north of the Li NGa River. Small secondary explosions indicated the possibility that an ammo cache had been hit. The second was called on a suspected base camp at YT 970446. Negative results were observed.
 - (d) At 231430 Dec another strike was called on a suspected VC base camp north of the Li NGa River with negative results.
 - (e) On 26 Dec a strike against a suspected enemy position at YT 840485 was aborted. Again, this was due to radio failure in the FAC aircraft.
 - (f) At 271230 Dec a strike was placed on a suspected VC supply dump north of the Li NGa River. White and gray smoke was observed in two secondary explosions. On the basis of this, another mission was diverted, and a second strike was placed on the target, however no further results were observed.
- (2) Immediate air strikes. On 22 Dec an immediate strike was put in at YT 874247 when elements of Troop B received automatic weapons fire from that area. The enemy had broken contact by the time the aircraft arrived, and the results of the strike were undetermined.
- b. Army Air. The light fire team attached to the Squadron flew a total of 27 missions during the operation. A total of approximately 150,000 rounds of 7.62 and 100 - 2.75 inch rockets were expended.
- c. Artillery.
- (1) General: Artillery support for the operation was provided by three batteries:
- (a) How Btry, 1st Sq., 11th ACR, 105 SP.
 - (b) B/7/9 Arty, 54th Arty Gp, 105 (towed).
 - (c) B/2/35 Arty, 54th Arty Gp, 155 SP.

The separate batteries were formed into a provisional battalion with the mission of direct support to the 1st Squadron. The command and control group was provided by the 2/35 Artillery.

- (2) The following types of missions were fired:
- (a) Each evening when the line troops assumed their positions, artillery fired defensive concentrations in their areas. These fires were continued intermittently throughout the night as part of the H and I program.
 - (b) Twenty-two will adjust missions were fired at small enemy elements. These fires in conjunction with friendly small arms fire caused the enemy to break contact in all cases. Fires were then shifted to suspected routes of withdrawal.
 - (c) Several fire for effect missions were fired on suspected enemy positions with unknown results.
 - (d) Small preparations on troop-sized objectives were fired as well as preplanned concentrations along routes for convoy protection.

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(e) On several occasions H and I fires were effective in securing caches of enemy rice which had been discovered too late in the day for immediate evacuation.

(3) Ammunition during the operation was expended in the following manner:

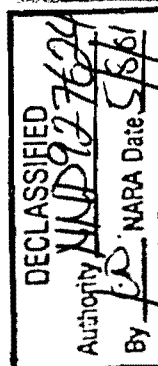
	105HE	105WP	155HE	155WP
(a) Registrations	180	14	103	
(b) H and I Fires	2625		1352	
(c) Defensive Concentrations	206		88	2
(d) Will Adjust Missions	992	46	333	
(e) Fire-for-effect and Preparations	344		38	
	<u>4347</u>	<u>60</u>	<u>1914</u>	<u>2</u>

8. INTELLIGENCE:

- a. Prior to Operation: Indications from all sources, including ARVN intelligence, advisors at HAM TAN and VO DAT, and Red Haze missions, showed that the VO DAT rice bowl area was not heavily defended by main force units, but that the D500 Separate Battalion (DONG NAI) and at least two NVA regiments were available for employment in the area of operations. Extensive rice caches and base areas defended by guerrilla units were reported in the mountain area north of the LA NGH River. The 421st VC district concentrated company also was reported operating in the MEPU - M'BRIM area.
- b. Value of Prior Intelligence: Intelligence history indicated that in the past year the VC were active in the M'BRIM area, this decided the Squadron Commander, in his search for base areas, to initially concentrate on this area. Prior intelligence and aerial observation permitted timely fire planning for the area of operations. Actual enemy resistance was light, as expected.
- c. Intelligence during the Operation: Intelligence received from the 10th ARVN Division Forward CP indicated a 200 man VC force (possibly from the 186th LF Bn) vicinity coordinates YT 8348. This information was checked and found to be unsubstantiated. Base camps and rice caches were found vicinity coordinates YT 8443, YT 8744, and YT 9143. Another ARVN report of a VC battalion, said to be located at YT 8333, was also checked with negative results. On 27 Dec, a battalion-sized base camp was discovered at YT 835443. It contained five huts and a large amount of rice. Documents found throughout the area referred to the 422nd LF Company, and listed numerous members of that organization. On 29 Dec, another base camp was discovered, containing several huts, animal pens, and rice. It was located at YT 925446. Paragraph 12 lists in detail the number of enemy killed, wounded, and captured, as well as enemy equipment and supplies captured or destroyed.

9. MISSION: Effective 030830H Dec 66 move from Base Camp to vic VO DAT (YT 7333) and establish combat base. Thereafter commence operations to secure route from SUOI DAT to TAMH LINH in coordination with CO 1F 52, 10th Inf Div (ARVN). Be prepared to secure US engineer work parties. Be pre-

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pared ONO to conduct search and destroy operations north of the LA NGA River. Continue security of GLA Rock Quarry.

10. CONCEPT OF OPERATION:

a. Maneuver: To conduct operation in 3 phases:

- (1) Phase I: Conduct tactical road march and establish combat base at VO DAT.
- (2) Phase II: Commence ops to secure route from SUOI CAT to TANH LINH and to secure engineer work parties on order.
- (3) Phase III: On Order, conduct search and destroy ops north of the LA NGA River.

b. Fires:

- (1) Arty: Priority of fire to convoy security initially, to the north and west of Routes 1 and 333.
- (2) TAC Air: On call, to the south and east of Routes 1 and 333.

11. EXECUTION:

General: Headquarters, 1st Sqdn, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment issued OPORD 15-66 (Opn DAN TAM 81) on 7 Dec 1966 assigning the mission stated in paragraph 9 above. At 071600 Dec all unit commanders were briefed on the mission. On 6 Dec, coordination was made at XUAN LOC with officials of the participating ARVN units and the 54th Arty Gp.

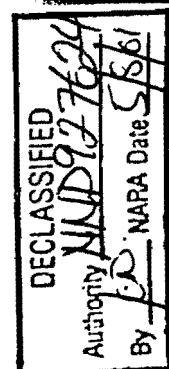
8 December 1966

Phase I: 1st Sqdn departed the Regimental Base Camp at 0830 on 8 Dec. Due to the number of vehicles involved, and the fact that some units were to integrate into the convoy at intermediate points along the route, the various elements were split into three march units. This division of elements into units of manageable size facilitated control.

In view of a history of ambushes along the route, a detailed fire plan was devised to support the convoy in any eventuality. Constant coverage by Forward Air Controllers and artillery concentrations at likely ambush sites were provided. Events proceeded according plan until the bridge at YT 679199 became damaged with passage of the lead elements. Engineer work was initiated, and the crossing was repaired after a delay of several hours. All elements closed into VC DAT just prior to nightfall and a combat base was established at YT 7232. Team Blast (see Annex A) remained at the GLA Rock Quarry (YT 6312) to provide for its security.

9 - 15 December 1966

Phase II: During this period, the Sqdn was primarily concerned with the repair and security of Route 333, the primary line of communication leading to the rice bowl area. Work parties from B Company, 27 Engineers commenced immediate operations to repair and improve the various bridge sites between SUOI CAT and VO DAT. Security forces guarding these

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work parties served a dual function in that elements of the Squadron were thereby dispersed along the route and aided in its security. The route security mission was further supported by road runner operations and Thunder Runs. A Thunder Run consisted of movement along the route by armored vehicles firing to either side of the road with short-range weapons such as the M-79 and 90mm cannister. This exercise proved extremely effective in insuring against route interdiction during the hours of curfew. Route improvement proceeded in an orderly fashion, and there was no enemy activity except for a light probe of the combat base perimeter on the night of 8 December.

16 - 18 December 1966

During this period, Phase II was continued with the primary engineer effort shifted to the route between VO DIT and TANH LINH. Work was begun on the bridge site at YT 837346 and the air strip at TAN LINH.

Also during this period, Phase III was initiated with a search and destroy operation north of the LA NGA River. On the night of 15 December, one platoon from B/27 Engineers displaced to the bridge site at YT 846389 and prepared it for crossing by elements of the 1st Sqdn and 3/43 ARVN. Early on the morning of 16 December, the crossing was accomplished without incident. At 0830, Troop C discovered a series of punji stakes and a recently used bunker at YT 866433. Both were destroyed. At 1139, Troop B found a hut with expended 20mm rounds, material for making shoes, and food at YT 890435. At 1500, elements of Troop A killed one VC at YT 920425. He was found to be armed with a Mauser rifle and one grenade. At 1500, Troop C discovered and destroyed a VC village which contained 14 huts, large amounts of rice, bunker systems, and a small amount of Cal 50 and shotgun ammo. On 17 December, A Troop made contact with an estimated VC squad at YT 982366. The VC escaped into the jungle to the north. C Troop found a deserted village which contained approximately 3 tons of rice. Troop A discovered from 30 to 40 tons of rice a short distance away. H & I fires were planned in the vicinity of these caches while plans were made to evacuate the rice the next day. On 18 December, at 1030, a platoon from Troop A encountered a VC squad at YT 917428, resulting in 2 US WIA from grenade fragments. An air strike was placed on the suspected route of withdrawal with unknown results. At 1615, Troop A again made contact, engaging 4 VC at YT 915349. One VC was killed and two were wounded. The latter escaped into the jungle. During the day approximately 60 tons of rice were evacuated and turned over to BINH TUY Province officials. Late in the evening, the Squadron recrossed the river and closed into the combat base at VO DIT at 2300.

19 - 25 December 1966

During this period, the Squadron continued to conduct Phase II operations and observed the cease fire from 0700 24 Dec to 0700 26 Dec. Engineer work was continued between VO DIT and TAN LINH. Road runner operations were conducted between VO DIT and SUMI CAT at an increased tempo. Brush burning operations were undertaken by the Sqdn on either side of Route 333 in selected areas to render ambush sites less tenable.

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On 19 December, the Sqdn partially stood down in order to perform maintenance.

26 - 30 December 1966

During this period the Sqdn continued with Phase II and again initiated Phase III operations. On the morning of 26 December, the Sqdn again crossed the LA NGA River with Troops A and B. Troop C and Company D continued the security of the combat base at VO DMT and the rock quarry at GIA RAY. The Sqdn CP and the provisional artillery battalion displaced to the bridge site at YT 846389. At 0940, Troop B found 500 lbs of rice at YT 835432. The rice was evacuated. At 1210, Troop B discovered what was judged to be a Viet Cong rest area at YT 815422. It contained a thatched hut, bunker system, and foxhole perimeter, and appeared to be four or five days old. Trails leading from the area were also lined with foxholes. This complex was destroyed. A short distance away, another 500 pound rice cache was discovered, and the rice was evacuated. At 1358, Troop A found a small base camp with tools, bunkers, and approximately 200 pounds of rice.

During the morning hours of 27 December, several sniper rounds were fired at both Troops A and B. There were no US casualties, and the fire was returned with unknown results. At 1215, Troop B engaged a VC squad at YT 836446, resulting in two VC KIA (B3). An airstrike was placed on the suspected route of withdrawal, and two secondary explosions were observed. At 1300, Troop B found a battalion sized base camp at YT 835448, containing five huts in good condition, and documents identifying the 422 Company, as well as the 420 and 421 IF Platoons. The base camp was destroyed.

On 28 December, Troops A and B conducted search and destroy operations in Objective SLED, vicinity coordinates YT 9244. Troop B engaged two VC at YT 925435 at 1400 with unknown results. A search of the area revealed one grenade, documents, and two bags of rice. The search was continued in the surrounding area with negative results.

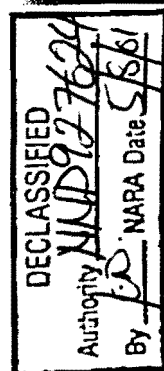
On 29 December, at 0635, Troop B engaged 3 to 4 VC at YT 925438. An attached ARVN infantryman was wounded during the encounter. The enemy fled with unknown results. At 0845, an ACW received slight damage from a command detonated mine at YT 489036. Later in the morning, B Troop discovered an enemy base camp at YT 835446. 100 pounds of rice were evacuated from the area, and the camp was destroyed. In the late afternoon, the Squadron returned to the combat base at VO DMT to prepare for the return march to the Regimental Base Camp.

On 30 December, the Squadron moved from VO DMT to the Regimental Base camp without incident, closing the latter at 1500 hours, and terminating the mission.

12. RESULTS:

a. US Losses: 8 WIA, 1 3/4 ton, 1 ACW damaged.

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b. Enemy Losses:

- (1) Personnel: 7 VC KIA (BC).
- (2) Equipment captured: 141.37 tons rice, 2 Mauser rifles, 1 Thompson SMG, 3 bags of assorted clothing, 2 grenades, 2 bicycles.
- (3) Equipment Destroyed: 6 bunkers, 17 structures, rest area, small base camp, 1 battalion sized base camp.

13. ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS:

The operation vicinity VO DAT had particular impact on logistical operations due to the length of the main supply route and its insecure condition. It was immediately apparent in planning that aerial resupply would have to be employed. VO DAT was particularly suitable in that there was an operational air strip adjacent to the planned combat base. This allowed for either fixed or rotary wing aircraft to be utilized and gave a greater available aircraft factor. Within three days of establishing the combat base at VO DAT daily Caribou resupply missions were being flown from XUAN LOC. These daily sorties enabled the Squadron to subsist on Class A rations. The Caribou was also used to bring in the mail, which was large in quantity due to the Christmas period. POL and route of communication, but by virtue of the aerial resupply available for emergency requirements, routine convoys had to be run every two or three days. On one occasion routine ammunition resupply was by air. The utilization of aircraft for resupply required reliable personnel in the base camp area as procedures for obtaining aircraft required constant coordination.

A "dustoff" helicopter was requested for medical evacuation and was provided for standby at the combat base. This allowed for immediate response to casualty evacuation requirements.

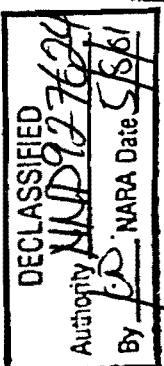
14. SPECIAL EQUIPMENT AND TECHNIQUES:

On two separate occasions, once on 18 December and again on 29 December, the Squadron employed CH-47 Chinook helicopters to evacuate large stores of captured enemy rice from a relatively remote area of poor trafficability. The efficacy of this method was proved by the amount of rice removed in such a short period of time, a chore which otherwise would have required the efforts of friendly troops for a much longer period.

15. COMMAND ANALYSIS: Operation DIN TAM 81 was successful in its immediate goal of securing the rice harvest operation in the VO DAT - TAN LINH area. The fact that the harvest was accomplished with complete freedom from Viet Cong harassment was no doubt a result of the dual threat imposed by ARVN security forces, and the presence of the Squadron as a mobile force capable of striking anywhere in the area on short notice.

The side effects of the operation were several. It was noted that the flow of commerce into the area increased sharply during the period,

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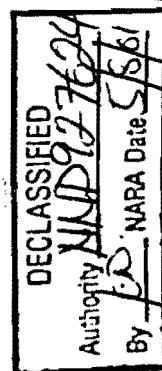
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a direct result of the increased presence of friendly troops and the route security effort. The operations north of the L. NGA River impressed the populace with the fact that friendly forces could operate in the area with impunity, and extract large stores of enemy rice for distribution by local government officials.

The reinforcement of the Squadron by ARVN infantry units aided in the accomplishment of search and destroy operations north of the river. In general, ARVN company-sized units attached to Reconnaissance Troops performed with enthusiasm and demonstrated capable leadership.

16. RECOMMENDATIONS: See Annex B.

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Annex A to COA/R (Opn D/N T/M 81)

Task Organization (Initially):

<u>Troop A</u>	<u>Team Blast</u>	<u>Troop C</u>	<u>Team Danger</u>
A/11	B/11 (-)	C/11	D/11
	1/D/11		3/B/11

Sqdn Control

1st How

B/2/35 Arty

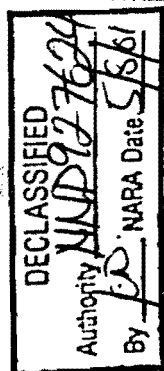
B/7/9 Arty

B/27 Engr

1/919 Engr

1 Sec/409th KRU

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Annex B to COMAR (Opn DAN T/M 81)

1. JOINT ARVN/US OPERATIONS:

- a. Small unit combined operations are most effective when US forces control. ARVN units are not normally trained to respond quickly to Sqdn frag orders. In addition, the basic differences in doctrine make it difficult to fully utilize US capabilities when an ARVN cmdr controls the operations.
- b. The most effective method of employing ARVN troops during perimeter defense is to reinforce US recon platoons with ARVN platoons, and have ARVN dig in between the tracks.
- c. During daylight dismounted operations, ARVN forces are most effective when employed as an integral unit. Lines of communication, command and control, and the use of ARVN leadership are the key factors to consider. However, if ARVN leaders are weak, the best method is to attach individual ARVN platoons to the recon platoons, and accept the communications problems.
- d. If ARVN ambush or recon patrols are emplaced forward of US positions, a US fire team or, at the very least, a radio liaison team should accompany each ARVN element. This will permit more rapid acquisition of intelligence information, provide better fire support and reaction, and provide exact verification of position and situation reports.
- e. The more effective ARVN units can be trained in practices which, while foreign to them, will increase their combat effectiveness such practices are:
 - (1) Digging in while occupying defensive positions.
 - (2) Observing noise and light discipline after EENT.
 - (3) Field sanitation procedures.
 - (4) Adequate local and flank security practices.

2. USE OF CHIEU HOI:

- a. The use of the "Open Arms" program to obtain intelligence of specific areas and for guides to areas can be very effective. During DAN T/M 81 - rice caches and VC base camps were pointed out exactly by a CHIEU HOI.
- b. If CHIEU HOI are used as guides, they should accompany the point elements, a practice which discourages the CHIEU HOI from leading US units into VC ambushes.

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