

82477

USARV (and Historian)

AARs

Box 1

CONFIDENTIAL

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
HEADQUARTERS 1ST INFANTRY DIVISION  
17th Military History Detachment  
APO San Francisco 96345

AVDB-T

1 May 1967

BATTLE OF AP BAU BANG  
20 March 1967

At 1150 hours 19 March 1967 A Troop 3d Squadron, 5th Cavalry, under the command of Captain Raoul H. Alcalá, 095764, San Antonio, Texas, was deployed into the perimeter of Fire Support Base 14 with five officers, 124 enlisted men, 20 M-113 armored personnel carriers, six M-48A3 tanks and three M-106 4.2 inch mortar carriers. Their mission was to occupy and secure Fire Support Base 14. They moved into position at 1150 hours 19 March 1967 and organized a "wagon train" style perimeter defense and constructed "DePuy foxholes". This type of foxhole had overhead covering and two firing ports placed at 45 degree angles from each side and is named after its originator, Major General William E. DePuy.

The intelligence information supplied Captain Alcalá indicated the BAU BANG area was infested with local force guerrillas. These local guerrillas had been conducting tax collecting activities and probes against friendly forces in the area. Also, a well-trodden VC trail had been pinpointed by intelligence one mile north of BAU BANG. The captain decided to use the 2d platoon, under the command of 1Lt Harlan E. Short, 05536968, to establish an ambush along the trail at coordinates XT780487, at 1800 hours. While the 2d platoon was preparing the ambush site, the perimeter was realigned with the 1st platoon, under the command of 1Lt Roger A. Festa, 05053163, Orange, Connecticut, occupying the western half from 6 to 12 o'clock and the 3d platoon occupying the eastern half from 12 to 6 o'clock. B Battery, 7th Battalion, 9th Artillery, under the command of Captain Duane W. Marion, 05508032, occupied the center of the perimeter. A 25 per cent alert status was initiated and maintained until enemy activity commenced.

The VC Probe:

The Battle of BAU BANG was initiated by a VC probe at 2250 hours 19 March 1967. The VC probe commenced with a herd of 15 cows wearing bells crossing Highway 13 at a point 150 meters northeast of the perimeter. At 2300 hours, 19 March 1967, a wheel mounted .50 calibre heavy machine gun opened fire on the northeast sector of the perimeter. The machine gun was located on a berm of the railroad track which parallels Highway 13 thirty meters east of the highway. The initial burst of fire wounded PFC Eugene D. Rigsby, US56432117, San Francisco, California, in the leg. Tank number 39, commanded by Sp4 Eugene W. Stevens, US56423162, Santa Cruz, California, opened fire on the VC position with 90mm high explosive rounds and .50 calibre and 7.62mm machine guns. The tank trained its search light on the VC position, and tracks number 30, 32, and 34 blasted away. Captain Alcalá requested artillery fire from Fire Support Base 14 and LAI KHE to fire 500 meters to the east of the enemy position in order to block the Viet Cong's escape route. Captain Alcalá with the guidance received from his squadron commander, LTC Sidney S. Hazzard, 060457, Needham, Massachusetts, chose not to concentrate the mass of his firepower on the enemy position. The VC heavy machine gun sprayed the perimeter with five blasts while receiving return fire. After this three minute fire fight the VC machine gun was silent, and no further action resulted. During the fire fight an enemy .50 calibre tracer round struck a box of C-4 on track No. 34, an APC, causing it to burst into flames. Sgt. James R. Musick,

DECLASSIFIED AT 3 YEAR INTERVALS  
DECLASSIFIED AFTER 12 YEARS  
DOD DIR 5200.10

CONFIDENTIAL

DECLASSIFIED

Authority: NND 933582

By: JW Date: 3-5-01

CONFIDENTIAL

RA52567890, St. Charles, Virginia, jumped onto the armored personnel carrier and threw the burning box of C-4 off, burning his hands badly. He was under steady enemy fire, and one .50 calibre round destroyed the M-60 machine gun mounted on top of the track. He jumped to the ground and attempted to extinguish the fire with sand.

A reconnaissance by fire along the woodline was conducted by 2Lt Hiram M. Wolfe II, OF109496, Louisburg, Pennsylvania, in track No. 36. He spaced the intervals of fire at 15-20 meters and fired periodically for about an hour. At 2310 hours Captain Alcalá reported to the 3-5 Cavalry net control station, "Firing has ceased now. We are using infra-red to scan the area of movement. The rate of fire received was too rapid for an M-60 and the bursts too long for an M-16."

During this lull the 2d platoon remained on the ambush site and went to a 50 per cent alert; the 1st platoon stayed at a 100 per cent alert, because it had fewer vehicles; the 3d platoon went back to a 50 per cent alert; and the headquarters platoon, reinforcing the 1st platoon, went to a 50 per cent alert. Everything appeared to return to normal.

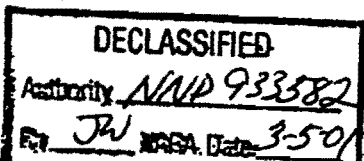
#### The Battle:

The main Viet Cong assault began at 0030 hours at Fire Support Base 14 with an unknown number of 60mm mortar rounds, rifle grenades, RPG's and recoilless rifle fire. The initial mortar rounds hit Lt Festa's track No. 16 wounding Sgt Edward Brevell, US54380765, Port Arthur, Texas. According to SSgt Ronald R. Dokken, RA16499280, Madison, Wisconsin, the VC heavily peppered the perimeter for several minutes with about 100 rounds of mortar fire. He believed the VC were zeroed in well, because the rounds were accurately placed in and around the perimeter. Lt Festa said, "The VC mortar rounds were coming from the west." Brigadier General James F. Hollingsworth, O34155, Sanger, Texas, Assistant Division Commander - A, 1st Infantry Division, said, "Their mortar positions were located from 1,500 to 2,000 meters west of BAU BANG in and around an old village that had been destroyed some time in the past. The mortar positions were located by radar from the LAI KHE artillery base. As I recall, during the battle they (the counter mortar fire radar) reported to me that the mortars were firing from the west. I understood the counter mortar radar played an important role in picking them up. However, the most accurate way of picking up the mortars during this battle was by the two artillery observers that I had airborne at the time, who could see the flashe from the mortars. I think that a combination of both brought about the location of the mortars."

About the same time that track No. 16 was hit, track No. 12 took direct hits in the front and left side by a recoilless rifle round. A small fire erupted inside, and soon the entire M-113 was engulfed in flames. The track commander, SSgt Glasper Minor, RA53092987, Junction City, Kansas, evacuated his three wounded crew members to a nearby foxhole. SSgt Minor received shrapnel in both legs. Lt Festa evacuated these wounded men from their foxhole refuge later in the battle.

During the initial attack, tanks No. 38 and 39 of the 3d platoon were hit. Tank No. 38 was hit in the searchlight and then in the turret, wounding the tank gunner, Sp4 Ronald Davis, US54383541, Barnsdale, Oklahoma. Tank No. 39 took hits in the sponson box, the blower motors, and the air cleaner. No one was injured on tank No 39, and both tanks remained in the battle.

CONFIDENTIAL



CONFIDENTIAL

During the mortar and anti-tank bombardment, Captain Alcalá maintained contact with his squadron commander. Small arms and automatic weapons fire hailed into the perimeter, and the forward movement of enemy troops was detected.

At approximately 0048 hours Viet Cong infantry began a ground assault on the perimeter from the southwest, west, southeast and northeast. The assault from the northeast appeared to be only a diversion. The advancing Viet Cong laid down a base of fire and moved steadily forward, keeping close to the ground. Captain Alcalá said, "Their attack was well coordinated with their mortar fire. Not until they came out into the open from the trees did we realize how big an attack it was." The men on the battlefield observed most of the VC wearing black pajamas or fatigues of dark cloth. Some VC had olive drab fatigues and khakis. All of the observable VC wore Ho Chi Minh sandals. Lt Festa said, "Their weapons were clean, oiled and well cared for. Their ammunition was in plastic bags or bandoleer ammo pouches. The ammo in the bandoleers was wrapped in olive drab plastic bags. They all had entrenching tools, about one pound of unpolished rice, and most had M-1 bayonets. Those who had Mauser rifles had their bayonets fixed for a charge. Their medics had a regular well equipped kit."

At 0050 hours Captain Alcalá reported to his headquarters that he could handle the attack; however, he asked that a ready reaction force be readied in case it was needed. LTC Hazard acknowledged this request and alerted the 1st platoon of B Troop and the 3d platoon of C Troop. These platoons were instructed to move to the area and hook up with A Troop. It became evident to the squadron commander, after noticing the growing size of the enemy offensive, that he should move his command element to the scene of the battle. Captain Alcalá was given permission to alert his 2d platoon, on the ambush site, to prepare for movement into the perimeter.

Second lieutenant Wolfe detected VC movement in his 3d platoon sector. Track No. 30, a 4.2 inch mortar carrier, fired night illumination into the 3d platoon area. The illumination lit the area effectively and made it possible to see VC troops crossing the road in an east to west direction. Lt Wolfe ordered his platoon to commence firing; the VC were stopped suddenly by the steady volume of fire. The Americans noted that the VC had failed to make their customary sounds of charge, bugles, and rebel yells during their advance. Lt Wolfe said, "I think they were moving in quietly under the cover of darkness to mass for an all out attack on the perimeter."

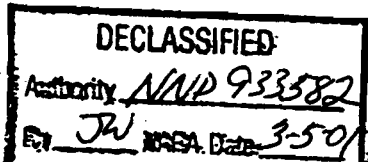
The commander of track No. 38, SSgt George Hua, RA29034003, Kona, Hawaii, said, "I got two hits on top of my turret from a 60mm mortar, and two hits struck the gun shield below the gun tube from a recoilless rifle. The enemy rounds glanced off and did not penetrate the armor. The shock from the explosives popped open the hatch, wounding the driver, Sp4 James Carter, US54372312, Cleveland, Texas, in the neck, chest and legs. I tried to evacuate him, but he refused to leave the vehicle until I left. Another enemy round hit the blast deflector of the main gun, so we opened fire with everything we could get our hands on."

At 0100 hours Captain Alcalá was informed that a flareship with mini-guns, called "Spooky 742", and a light fire team of helicopter gunships were available and would be in position shortly.

The communist troops from the southwest were now hitting the perimeter hard. Track No. 10, a M-106, radioed SSgt Dokken in track No. 17, and said, "They are swarming all over my track; dust me with cannister." SSgt Dokken hesitated; he was afraid of the effects of the cannister on the crew of track No. 10. Track No. 10 answered, "My people are down, shoot!"

3

CONFIDENTIAL



CONFIDENTIAL

SSgt Florentino Catudan, RA50008329, Batac, Phillipines, commander of track No. 10, had a wounded man, Sp4 Richard B. Abke, US55894203, St. Claris Shores, Michigan. Realizing the seriousness of the situation, SSgt Dokken fired four or five cannisters in the direction of track No. 10. The commander of track No. 11, SSgt Rafael Ramos-Rosario, RA50109463, Codra, Puerto Rico also asked for a dusting of cannister. Tank No 17 fired a couple of rounds of cannister to the front of track No. 11, killing the attacking Viet Cong. Once again SSgt Catudan radioed for help. He was pleading, "Give me your cannister; they're still coming. Help me please!" SSgt Dokken fired one cannister round in answer to SSgt Catudan's call, when suddenly track No. 10 was hit by five mortar rounds, and burst into a ball of flames. SSgt Dokken said, "I could see people all around the track. I hoped the people around the track were the crew, so I couldn't continue firing there. I continued to fire on my sector of the western side of the perimeter." Track No. 10 continued to burn, while the wounded crew escaped. The crew of this track, No. 10 was SSgt Catudan, Sp4 Abke, PFC Steve Lopez, US56425384, Fremont, California, and Sp4 Ted Taylor, US64000372, Chinle, Arizona. PFC Lopez was evacuated and later died of his wounds in the hospital. Sp4 Taylor, wounded with shrapnel in the back, chose to remain on the battlefield and did not tell anyone he was wounded until daybreak. The track burned for 15 minutes and then exploded. It was then that track No. 17 sprayed the area with additional cannister.

At 0126 hours Captain Alcalá received permission to recall the already alerted 2d platoon from the ambush site to the beleaguered perimeter. Bravo and Charlie Troop elements, readied to fight, were ordered to move to Fire Support Base 14. At 0310 hours the 3-5 Cavalry squadron commander reported the following message to his 1st Brigade, which was also under the operational control of the 1st Infantry Division: "A Troop is being hit hard. Have just sent reaction force. Also, they are receiving heavy dismounted action."

As the 2d platoon, under the command of Lt Short, left the ambush site to go to the perimeter, they exploded their previously distributed claymores and trip flares. The tracks and tanks of the 2d platoon then headed south on Highway 13 to their troop perimeter at top speed. They put out continuous bursts of .50 calibre fire to ward off any would-be attackers. Lt Short said, "He didn't believe the VC fired on them on their way down the highway." The 2d platoon filled in the gaps in the hard pressed southern half of the perimeter.

Just prior to the return of the 2d platoon, track No. 34 at the northern portion of the perimeter was hit by a recoilless rifle round which penetrated the engine and entered the troop compartment wounding Sgt Robert A. Tydingco, RA50010144, Guam. His report to Lt Wolfe indicated that although the track had been hit it was still operative. Three minutes after track No. 34 was hit, track No. 36, with Lt Wolfe received a direct hit. Lt Wolfe said, "The shot hit my track in the rear, as I had previously turned the track to the northeast to get a better field of fire with my M-60 machine gun on the attacking VC troops. The round penetrated my track's right rear fender and left a big hole. By that time the VC were too close to my line of tracks, so I moved my line of tracks about 25 or 30 meters back toward the artillery positions." As the tracks moved back to realign the perimeter, track No. 16 remained stationary. He had lost communications temporarily. It was 0115 hours when the eastern half of the perimeter completed the realignment.

4

CONFIDENTIAL

DECLASSIFIED

Authority: NND 933582

By: JW NNSA Date: 3-5-01

# CONFIDENTIAL

Lt Wolfe's track, No. 36, was hit again with an RPG-2 wounding the entire crew, including Lt Wolfe. The track had become tangled in the defensive barbed wire. The track entangled itself and was now given protection by tracks 33 and 35 on its flanks. Upon gaining its new position, the wounded were evacuated to the medical clearing tent that had been erected in the center of the perimeter. The center area provided enough clearance for a helicopter to land.

As soon as the 2d platoon secured their positions in the perimeter they were hit with recoilless rifle and grenade fire. Lt Short said, "When I pulled into position my platoon pulled into the south. Then I got a call from Captain Alcalá to move a couple of my elements to the north to fill a gap that existed there. I called my platoon sergeant to position the rest of the tracks. I took my tank, No. 27, and tank No. 29 to a position in the northeastern part of the perimeter facing north. Then I got a call from Captain Alcalá to extend the perimeter. I pulled my tank up about 35 to 40 meters due north. As I was moving forward the searchlight of tank No. 29 was hit by a recoilless rifle round. He continued to fire back at the Viet Cong, and while I was moving with him I was hit on the gunshield by a recoilless rifle round. The shock of the round knocked out the track driver as he halted the track. Two more rounds hit and penetrated the left side of the turret wounding the gunner, Sp4 Richard L. Hill, US54381969, Goldsboro, Texas."

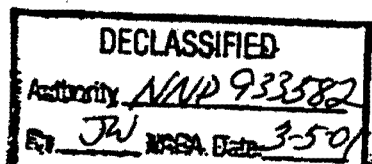
Massive quantities of artillery fire were employed during the battle. Brigadier General Hollingsworth said, "We continued to press the attack with artillery from LAI KHE. We had a battery of 105mm howitzers, A Battery of the 7-9 Artillery, a corps artillery element; and A Battery of the 8-6 Artillery, from the 1st Infantry Division, which is a 155mm self-propelled artillery unit. During the preparation and firing of artillery into the enemy position, and the intensification of our own fires on the perimeter, we started setting up airstrikes. We called for the Air Force flare ship, commonly known as "Spooky." At the same time, we called in our own light fire teams to augment certain parts of the perimeter, and by about 0200 hours in the morning we had artillery covering the west and the southwest sides of the perimeter. We had gunships covering the east side of the perimeter."

At about 0145 hours, the 1st platoon of B Troop, 3-5 Cavalry arrived at the position. On their way down Highway 13, at 0143 hours, they blasted their way through an ambush hastily set up just north of the perimeter. The 3d platoon of C Troop, moving up from the south, also ran through a barrage of enemy fire before reaching the perimeter of Fire Support Base 14. Both cavalry units moved into the perimeter without suffering any damage or casualties.

The 3d platoon of C Troop was attached to A Troop at 0127 hours. At that time, Captain Alcalá had the platoon deploy on a cavalry sweep 1,500 meters south of the perimeter. They turned off Highway 13 and proceeded to the west in an echelon-right formation, firing north as they moved. The Viet Cong were using a sector of the old rubber plantation for assembly areas to concentrate their attacks on the perimeter. When the cavalry platoon moved into a position to block along the sector of rubber from the south toward the north, Captain Alcalá had the platoon sit in that position for about 20 minutes. Then he moved this armored force in a sweep through very light jungle to the west and then to the northwest to come around to a position that was 1,500 meters to the southwest or 7:30 o'clock from the perimeter. Again the armored force fired at the VC in the direction of the perimeter as they moved. While they were at this position southwest of the perimeter, airstrikes were due to come in and Captain Alcalá gave the platoon orders to double back and proceed to the southeast corner of the perimeter. This platoon closed into the perimeter area at 0220 hours.

5

# CONFIDENTIAL



# CONFIDENTIAL

When the B Troop element arrived, they moved around to the south, just outside of the perimeter, shooting as they went. Then they moved inside the perimeter and occupied positions between the A Troop vehicles on the western half of the perimeter from 6 to 12 o'clock. When the C Troop element closed the perimeter area they, too, swept around the area firing at the stunned Viet Cong as they moved. They then moved into positions between the A Troop vehicles on the eastern half of the perimeter, from 12 to 6 o'clock.

At this point the perimeter of Fire Support Base 14 contained B Battery, 1-7 Artillery, all of A Troop, 3-5 Cavalry, the 1st platoon of B Troop, 3-5 Cavalry, and the 3d platoon of C Troop, 3-5 Cavalry. This was a large amount of armor for the size of the perimeter, and Captain Alcalá decided to expand the perimeter. The armored force all around the perimeter counter-attacked at about 0220 hours to regain the 40 meters that had been lost from the original perimeter.

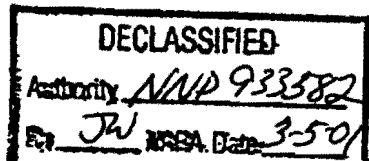
The number 10 and 12 tracks had been burning all this time. Lt Festa moved forward with two M-113 tracks to evacuate the wounded men who were lying in a hole near the burning vehicles. During this time the southeast corner of the perimeter was under heavy attack. Lt Festa said, "On top of the burning armored personnel carrier I found three VC trying to get the .50 calibre machine gun off. I shot two of them, and Sp4 Abelardo Penedo, US66001401, Long Beach, California, on the No. 24 track told me he got the other one." As tracks No. 21 and 24 moved forward they saw five Viet Cong attacking the foxhole containing the wounded men from tracks No. 10 and 12. The attacking VC were immediately taken under fire and killed. Sp4 Penedo and Lt Festa jumped from their tracks and ran over to help recover the wounded. SSgt Minor was one of the wounded. He was placed inside Lt Festa's personnel carrier. The wounded were then taken back to the medics. This evacuation of wounded under fire began at about 0245 hours and lasted until about 0315 hours.

At the same time, the squadron commander, LTC Haszard, in an M-113 and followed by another M-113, moved up Highway 13 and drove into the heaviest part of the Viet Cong attack, where a seal of US artillery fire had been placed. As the squadron commander's track came within sight of the perimeter, his vehicle was struck by either an artillery or a recoilless rifle round. The round knocked out his engine and killed his right gunner. Two minutes earlier LTC Haszard had been acting as the right gunner.

Captain Alcalá, on seeing the squadron commander's track stopped by a direct hit, sent a tank, No. C-37, forward to assist in the recovery of the damaged M-113. Brigadier General Hollingsworth observed the action and said, "LTC Haszard performed a very gallant act under fire when he dismounted his vehicle and proceeded to move the escort vehicle into position to tow his damaged vehicle into the perimeter. I discussed with him at that time the importance of his getting into the perimeter and getting tied in with the A Troop commander. Communications at this time are very vital to the success of a battle, and I was particularly interested in his getting inside the perimeter so that in case the troop commander's communications were knocked out, I would still have communications with the forces on the ground."

When LTC Haszard's track was knocked out between the perimeter and the road, he didn't believe the VC were as close to the perimeter as they actually were. Even Captain Alcalá didn't believe the Viet Cong were near the area where the squadron commander's track was stopped. Captain Alcalá's cannister rounds, machine guns, and high explosives had been pounding that area for about two hours. When LTC Haszard dismounted his track there were VC in his immediate area which he had to ward off before he could hook his vehicle to the tow line.

# CONFIDENTIAL



## CONFIDENTIAL

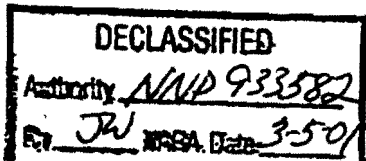
Just before the squadron commander got his command track and group into the perimeter, Lt Short's No. 27 tank took a hit from a recoilless rifle round which penetrated the turret, killing his loader, PFC James Haggard, RA25515472, Louisiana, and throwing Lt Short out of the tank. Lt Short said, "I climbed back up on the tank, but I couldn't get my driver, Sp4 Kenneth Miller, US55869005, Flint, Michigan, to answer; so I went up to the front of my tank to try to talk to him. While I was standing there the No. 29 tank to my left called on the radio to my driver and told him to back up. We then backed up the tank to a position beside the medic's track. Sgt Stevens got off No. 29 track while Sp4 Fenedo came over to help me pull my loader out of the turret. After I got the rest of the crew out of the tank I spent about 15 minutes or so carrying the wounded from No. 44 track to the dust off area. Fenedo and I got back on No. 27 track and blasted away at the VC. Sgt Stevens, whose wounds were unknown to me at the time, got back onto his No. 29 tank. After I moved my tank back into the fight I didn't receive any more enemy rounds. The fighting to the south was quite heavy now."

Another VC round hit and glanced off the No. 38 tank of SSgt George Hua, SSgt Douglas B. Casey, RA54052578, Shreveport, Louisiana said, "I told my driver to shift over to cover tank No. 38's position and to move us into direct line with the VC gunner. The tanks blasted away at the VC anti-tank position. Then tank No. 38 took another hit which took the .50 calibre machine gun out of SSgt Hua's hands. SSgt Hua then returned back to his cupola and told me he was okay. We both fired at the VC recoilless position and knocked it out." The time was now about 0300 hours and the VC commenced another attack in the southern sector of the perimeter.

It appeared to Captain Alcalá and his troops that this attack was an attempt to recover VC bodies. They noted that the VC troops were attacking in a line of skirmishers, but immediately behind them were unarmed troops with ropes and wire with hooks to recover the bodies left on the battlefield. The attacking enemy force got almost as close as on the other attacks before being stopped about 15 meters in front of the perimeter. Again, the attacking VC got too close for Lt Wolfe's platoon to continue to deliver effective fire with their tank guns. So again, the line was pulled back on the eastern side of the perimeter 20 meters, and, again, after the VC were killed the line was reorganized and the original positions retaken.

During this attack at 0300 hours, airstrikes and "dragon ships" were employed on the attacking Viet Cong. The airstrikes were to continue to pound the Viet Cong positions until about 0700 hours that morning. According to Captain Alcalá, "The initial airstrikes were from south to north on the east side of Highway 13. It appeared at that time that the source of the attacks was in the east to northeast side of the highway. There was a berm by the road and a railroad bed that was used for cover and concealment by the VC. Also there was good jungle foliage for concealment, and there was a creek bed which the VC could use for limited cover. Subsequent airstrikes hit the rubber tree line to the south of the perimeter. The later attacks actually broke up the Viet Cong attacks and caused the enemy to stop attacking and fall back in the southeast. In other places along the 360 degree perimeter the Viet Cong could not easily fall back because of the large amount of open space they had to cross. As a result, those VC who tried to withdraw in the west, north, and northeast were cut down by the large volume of fire directed on them. The southeast corner offered them the only good route of withdrawal. After about 30 minutes of airstrikes on the north-south axis east of the perimeter, the airstrikes shifted to an east-west axis south of the perimeter and continued there until 0400 hours.

CONFIDENTIAL



## CONFIDENTIAL

During the battle, resupply and dust off missions were made by the 1st Infantry Division operations center under the direction of LTC Paul F. Gorman, 062379, Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3, 1st Infantry Division. Also, during a battle of this scale, the .50 calibre and 7.62mm machine guns expend ammunition very heavily. Lt Wolfe said, "My ammo was getting low at around 0345 hours. I had about 700 rounds of .50 calibre ammo, and about 1,000 rounds of 7.62mm ammo left after the main assaults were beaten back. I had originally a triple basic load and had fired over two loads. The VC had backed off in other sectors of the perimeter, but they had not done so in my sector, as the ground to the southeast had many holes and dips which made movement in this sector easiest for them. Also we now occupied the weakest part of the perimeter, as all of my tracks had been hit and almost all of our weapons were not functioning."

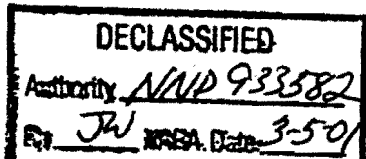
Just prior to 0445 hours, the resupply and evacuation of the wounded was completed. "At about 0330 hours in the morning the VC fire slackened off to the point that I felt that I could first get the wounded out," said Brigadier General Hollingsworth. The general went on to say, "I want to state that one of the important points in this battle was that the artillery and the airstrikes continued during the evacuation of the wounded. Of the 63 men wounded we evacuated 26. Many soldiers were only slightly wounded, and they chose to stay in their positions manning their weapons during this battle. In the meantime, my judgement indicated, from past experiences with the VC, that there is no question that this was a regimental size attack."

At 0500 hours the Viet Cong began to launch their final attack, from the south and southeast. At that time, a CBU airstrike by F-100's started to come in from east to west in the area south and southeast of the perimeter. At the same time, the artillery continued to fire east of the 84 grid line. Following the CBU attack a napalm airstrike was placed in the same general area. Artillery fire was also shifted to fall to the north of the perimeter, to cover possible escape routes northeast of Highway 13 along the railroad tracks, the stream bed, and the trail.

At 0500 hours the airstrikes were brought back into the area to break up the concentration of VC troops in the rubber trees. Realizing that the VC were assembling in the rubber for a final assault, Brigadier General Hollingsworth asked LTC Gorman to stack at least four flights of air support to be ready on station at 0500 hours. During the night the general planned to move the air attacks from the east across to the southern part of the sector, bringing in napalm and CBU. The general then planned to move them across the southwest and finally, work CBU, napalm, and bombs along the western sides of the sector, while moving the artillery further to the west into an area to which he expected the VC to withdraw. The general said, "I chose to move the airstrikes at 0450 hours. I shifted the artillery to the west, and I began the airstrikes across the southern part of the perimeter with the idea in mind that I'd move them to the southwest and then to the west. It just so happened that the final assault of the VC started at 0500 hours. With the assistance of flares and tank searchlights that were shining in the area, we could see the assault mounting. Thirty seconds away from the area in which the final assault was to occur and did occur were two F-100's ready to deliver CBU. As the VC got up to make their final assault, they were met by the CBU from the F-100's."

Captain Alcalá and Lt Wolfe saw one of the F-100's making a pass from east to west. Lt Wolfe said, "I saw the CBU explode while he was on top of it. He probably released it too soon." Captain Alcalá said, "He tried to gain altitude by banking to the left and then up. The aircraft went into what looked like a stall position when his engine quit. He then crashed."

CONFIDENTIAL



## CONFIDENTIAL

Lt Wolfe said, "During the CBU attack the F-100 that crashed made his run at an altitude of only 50 feet above the trees. Brigadier General Hollingsworth's comment was, "We lost in the battle one F-100, and I am not certain whether the aircraft was shot down or it developed some mechanical problem. The final assault on the VC, however, was ended, and the small arms fire from the VC ceased. The battle was now left to the airstrikes and the artillery fire."

The F-100 crashed 2,000 meters east-southeast of Fire Support Base 14's perimeter at coordinates XT830447. At about 0815 hours C Troop, 1-4 Cavalry tried to land their helicopters at the crash site, but heavy enemy ground fire forced their helicopters to take altitude without grounding the troops. Observations made by D Troop 1-4 Cavalry personnel were that the F-100 pilot's parachute opened when he hit the ground. At about 0900 hours, after a light fire team had worked over the area, the troops landed at the crash site and recovered the dead pilot's body.

At 0700 hours the final airstrike was placed on the withdrawing Viet Cong. Brigadier General Hollingsworth then landed at Fire Support Base 14 and met with LTC Haszard. Instructions had already been issued to the cavalry at Fire Support Base 14 to move out at daybreak to attack in order to pick up the wounded, the prisoners, the abandoned weapons, and to count the dead. At 0947 hours C Troop 1-4 Cavalry went under the operational control of the 1st Brigade, 9th Infantry Division, which at the time of this battle was under the operational control of the BIG RED ONE. C Troop 1-4 Cavalry then assumed the mission of A Troop 3-5 Cavalry.

After the battle was over, LTC Haszard delivered to the men who had taken part in the battle the following message, "I am extremely proud of every man in this unit for their actions last night. However, there are still many VC in the area. Therefore, you must take all precautions. I want you to have reaction forces ready for all elements in the way that you did today. I must have any weapons that have been claimed as souvenirs. They will be returned, I promise. Sweep operations tomorrow must be done thoroughly. Insure that perimeters tonight are the best possible."

After the battle was over, at 1210 hours, Brigadier General Hollingsworth gave the following message to the 1st Division G-5: "Print up news leaflets addressed to Commanding General, 9th VC Division telling him that his battalion commanders and regimental commanders of the 273d VC Regiment have left the battlefield covered with dead and wounded and that we don't consider this very soldierly. We intend to bury his dead for him, but wanted him to know what his commanders did, so he can take disciplinary action." Brigadier General Hollingsworth knew that the VC have self-criticism programs, and they discuss such things as how well the battalion commander, the company commander, and the political officers have performed in battles. During Operations CEDAR FALLS and JUNCTION CITY, he noticed that several battalion commanders had been reduced in rank along with the political officers because they had left dead and wounded on the battlefield.

## Results:

The Battle of AF BAU BANG II resulted in the following losses: 227 VC KIA (BC), and 3 VC WIA captured. Captured enemy equipment included: 1 Chicom type 57 machine gun, 1 Chicom type 58 machine gun, 1 Chicom type 56 machine gun, 1 Chicom type 50 sub-machine gun, 2 Chicom 56 rifles, 2B-40 rocket launchers, 1 US BAR, 2 AK-47's, 74 Chicom grenades, 1,185 crimp cartridges, 33 rifle grenades, 1 US grenade, 37 K50 magazines, 8 BAR magazines, 19 AK-47 magazines, 10 B-40 rockets, 2 57mm rounds, 3 75mm rounds, 9 drum magazines for Chicom 58, 1 base plate 60mm mortar, 2 lbs TNT,

CONFIDENTIAL

DECLASSIFIED

Authority: NND 933582

By: JW Date: 3-5-01

CONFIDENTIAL

16 hammocks, 3 VC gas masks, 26 canteens, 7 ponchos, 1 lantern, 2 machetes, 1 grappling hook with a 50 foot rope, 1 US bayonet scabbard, 10 pistol belts, 1 field pack, 18 entrenching tools, 3 picks, misc individual clothing, and 15 lbs of documents. Destroyed enemy equipment was 1 B-40 rocket launcher, 1 TA-312 telephone, 1 B-40 round and 231 uniforms.

Captured enemy prisoners identified the attackers as the 2d and 3d Battalions of the 273d VC Regiment and one local guerrilla company. US intelligence believes that the entire 273d Regiment took part in the attack on Fire Support Base 14.

Friendly losses during the battle were 3 US KHA and 63 US WHA (26 evacuated). Friendly equipment destroyed was 1 M-113 and 1 M-106. Friendly equipment damaged was 5 M-48A3 tanks and 11 M-113 APC's.

In support of the US forces in Fire Support Base 14 was an overwhelming amount of artillery and airpower placed on the attacking VC forces. There was a total of 29 sorties flown, dropping 25 tons of ordnance on the Viet Cong. The artillery fired 2,148 rounds of 105mm, 688 rounds of 155mm, 39 rounds of 175mm, and 69 rounds of 8 inch howitzer ammunition.

The following statistics reflect the amount of ammunition expenditure of the 3-5 Cavalry elements at Fire Support Base 14 during the battle:

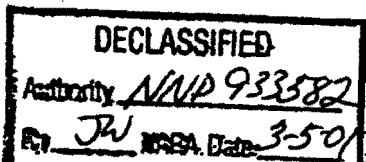
<u>A Troop 3-5 Cav</u>	<u>1st Platoon C Troop 3-5 Cav</u>
1. 30 trip flares	1. 20 rds 4.2" illum.
2. 40 claymores	2. 15 rds 90mm cannister
3. 2,000 rds .45 cal	3. 4 rds 90mm HE
4. 600 rds 40mm M-79	4. 5,000 rds .50 cal
5. 34,000 rds .50 cal	5. 18,000 rds 7.62mm
6. 42,000 rds 7.62mm	6. 8 white flares
7. 19 rds 4.2" illum.	7. 12 fragmentation grenades
8. 10 rds 4.2" WF	
9. 6,880 rds 5.56mm	<u>1st Platoon B Troop 3-5 Cav</u>
10. 60 rds 90mm cannister	1. 105,000 rds .50 cal
11. 20 rds 90mm HE	2. 2,000 rds 7.62mm
12. 1 rd 90mm HEAT	3. 7 rds 90mm WP
	4. 29 rds 90mm HE
	5. 54 rds 90mm cannister
	6. 2 bases M-79 rds
	7. 1 case 5.56mm ammo

Analysis:

Brigadier General Hollingsworth gave the following summation of the action: "The 3-5 Cavalry had been in-country only about two or three months, and the battle at BAU BANG proved to be a very fine action on the part of the new unit. It was their first major battle. We found when we examined the documents on the dead and interrogated the wounded prisoners that, as I had suspected, the attacking VC force was the 273d VC Regiment. I understand that the G-2 has now identified all three of the battalions.

The problems we had during the battle were not unusual ones. We had some trouble with communications, which are vital. Though our casualties were light, we encountered a few problems in redistributing the APC's and the tanks to fill the holes that occurred in the line. I think that only three of our men were killed, and about 63 wounded, of which we had to evacuate only 26.

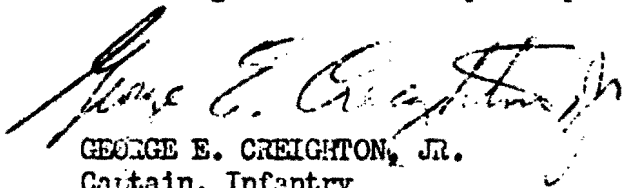
CONFIDENTIAL



REF ID: A66666

CONFIDENTIAL

There are three factors which accounted entirely for our success in this battle. First, there is the great bravery and the courage of the young American drafted-soldier to stand and fight. Second, there is the massive use of artillery. Third, there is the massive, accurate, and devastating use of tactical air support. There is no question in my mind that battles here are won because of the massive use of artillery and tactical air support. I think that in this type of battle, more VC are killed by machine gun and small arms fire when they attack a cavalry unit than if they had been attacking an infantry unit. This is understandable because we have a greater number of machine guns in a cavalry troop."



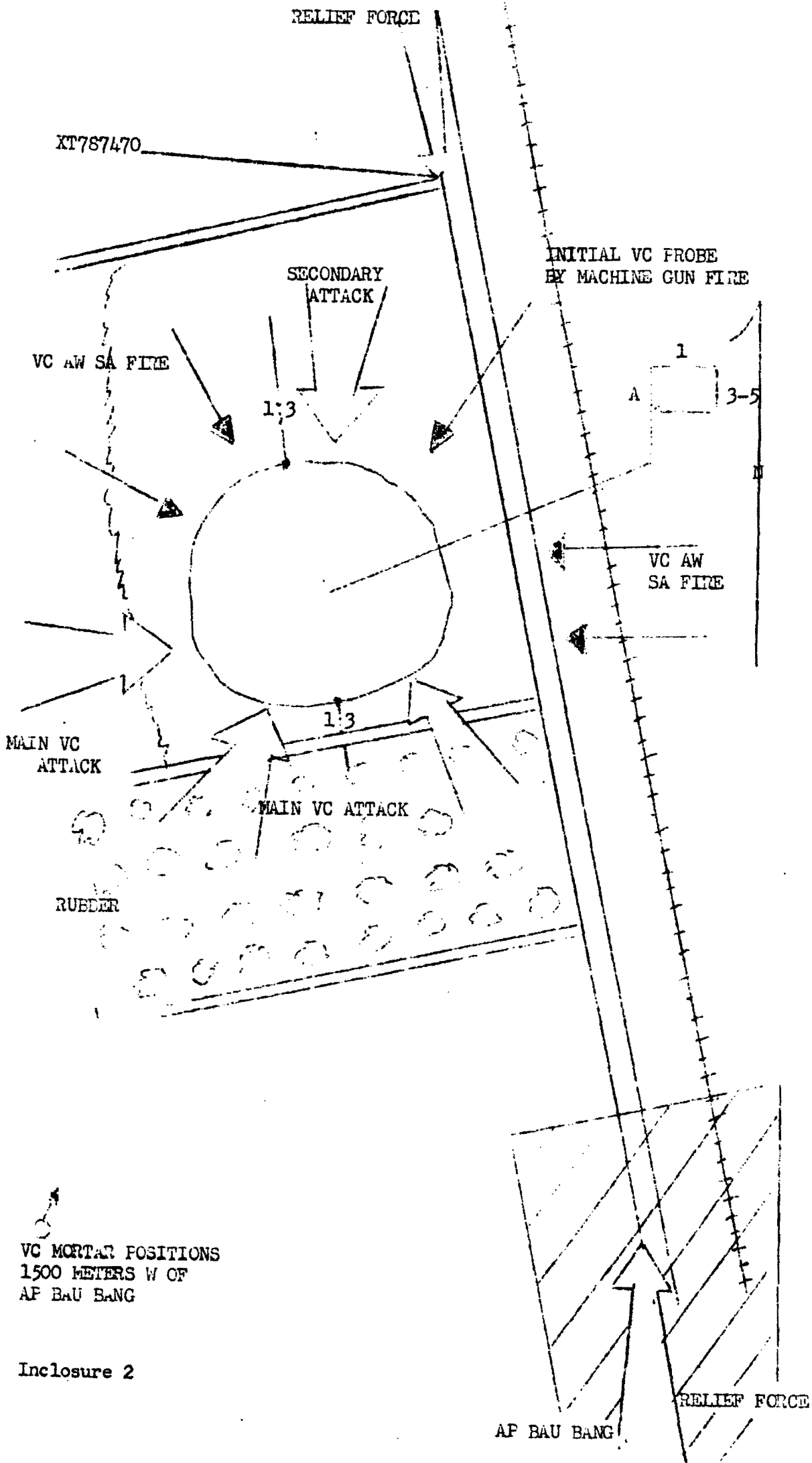
GEORGE E. CREIGHTON, JR.  
Captain, Infantry  
Commanding

- 2 Incl
1. Map Sheet 6331 IV S (Series L8020)
  2. Battle Sketch

CONFIDENTIAL

DECLASSIFIED  
Authority: NND 933582  
By: JW NNSA Date: 3-5-01

CONFIDENTIAL



CONFIDENTIAL

DECLASSIFIED

Authority NND 933582

By JW Date 3-5-01