

RG472 USA VN
1ST ID, G3,
AARs Feb 68-MAR 69
Box 4

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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS 1ST SQUADRON 4TH CAVALRY
APO San Francisco 96345

AVDB-CHCO

24 October 1968

SUBJECT: After Action Report, Operations at LOC NINH and QUAN LOI

Commanding Officer
1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division
ATTN: S-3
APO US Forces 96345

1. (U) OPERATION: LOC NINH and QUAN LOI areas.
2. (U) DATES OF OPERATION: 25 September 1968 to 9 October 1968.
3. (U) LOCATION: Binh Long Province.
4. (U) REPORTING OFFICER: Lieutenant Colonel John C. Faith, Commanding Officer, 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry.
5. (C) GENERAL: The 1st Squadron, 4th United States Cavalry, 1st Infantry Division conducted RIF operations in the northern part of the 1st Brigade AO vicinity of Loc Ninh RVN from 25 September 1968 to 2 October 1968, and vicinity of Quan Loi RVN from 2 October 1968 through 9 October 1968. The RIF operations were all combined U.S. and ARVN operations. The enemy was engaged on four separate occasions, two on 4 October 1968 and the other two on 6 October 1968. All engagements were in the vicinity of QUAN LOI and AN LOC RVN.
6. (C) TASK ORGANIZATION:
 - Headquarters, 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry
 - Troop A, 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry
 - Troop B, 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry
 - 2d Battalion, 9th ARVN Infantry (26 Sep - 1 Oct)
 - 9th and 11th Company, 3d Battalion, 9th ARVN Infantry (2 Oct - 8 Oct)
7. (C) INTELLIGENCE:
 - a. Information: The 1st Brigade S-2, the Squadron S-2, the Battlefield Information Center, the AN LOC Sector S-2, the AN LOC DIOCC, and the LOC NINH DIOCC provided information for this operation.

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b. Enemy Forces:

(1) 26 September - 1 October. In addition to the two local force VC companies which operate in the LOC MINH area, intelligence reports indicated that elements of the 7th NVA Division might be present. This was a strong possibility since elements of the 1st Division had encountered heavy contact in this area on 10 - 15 September 1968.

(2) 2 October - 8 October: In addition to the three local force companies that operate in the AN LOC District, intelligence reports indicated the possible presence of main force units. At least several agent reports in late September and early October indicated large groups (100 - 300) of Viet Cong. Also, information suggested that the enemy used the western portions of the AO as an infiltration route in the past.

c. Terrain:

(1) 26 September - 1 October: The terrain in this AO consisted mostly of rubber plantations. Trafficability was fair.

(2) 2 October - 8 October: The terrain in this AO consisted largely of rubber plantations. Trafficability was fair.

d. Weather: Except for the adverse effect on trafficability, the weather had no effect on operations during this reporting period.

e. Significant Incidents:

(1) 26 September - 1 October: None

(2) 2 October - 8 October:

a. 021923 October 1968, Squadron vicinity coordinates XT 758815, while enroute to village seal, received sniper fire resulting in 1 US WHA.

b. 030657 October 1968, Squadron vicinity coordinates XT 729817 completed seal of MINH JUC VILLAGE. They screened 250 people, detained 10 people for improper I. D. cards, 1 draft dodger, 2 Viet Cong suspects along with wife and two children of one.

c. 031515 October 1968, Squadron vicinity coordinates XT 750856 sealed the village of THANH BINH after a FAC had reported that a Viet Cong Squad entered the village. AN LOC National Police screened 155 people, detained and evacuated one Viet Cong PW and 16 detainees.

d. 040337 October 1968 Squadron vicinity coordinates XT 736857 at their RCM positions received unknown number of unidentified mortars rounds, 30-40 A-G rounds, and a ground probe resulting in 4 US KHA, 6 US WHA, 1 ARVN KIA, and 2 ARVN WIA.

e. 041230 October 1968, Squadron vicinity XT 715847 engaged an unknown size VC force resulting in 1 US KHA and 5 VC KIA (DC).

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f. ~~060950~~ October 1968, Squadron made contact with an unknown size VC force. The contact lasted until 16~~00~~ hours. The results of the action were 1 US KHA, 5 US WIA, 1 ARVN KIA, 1 ARVN WIA, 45 VC KIA (BC).

g. The VC KIA (BC) for the operation (2 October - 8 October 1968) was 50 (33 for A Troop and 17 for B Troop). 26 suspects were detained in two village seals on 2 October and 3 October. These suspects were interrogated through ARVN channels. Since very few intelligence facts were collected from the contacts on 4 October and 6 October, only speculations can be made concerning the enemy units involved. An infiltration pass taken from a dead body on 6 October suggested that either the 141st or 32d Regiments was involved.

8. (C) MISSION:

1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry with Troops A and B and operational control of ARVN Infantry elements conducted reconnaissance in force operations in the LOC NINH and QUAN LOI (AN LOC) areas with the task of locating and destroying VC/NVA forces operating in the areas.

9. (C) EXECUTION:

25 Sep: 1-4 Cav departed PHU LOI at ~~0700~~ hours, conducting a road march from PHU LOI to LOC NINH RVN. Maintenance breaks were 30 minutes in length and were performed at LAI KHE and AN LOC. At AN LOC, the Squadron assumed OFCON of C/8-6 Artillery which provided direct fire support for the Squadron's operations in the LOC NINH vicinity. At AN LOC, the Squadron trains were released to move to QUAN LOI where they set up a base for resupply. The tactical elements of the Squadron closed LOC NINH at approximately 1730 hours. Troops A and B moved into an RON position at the southwestern end of the landing strip. The CP was set up in an HDF between the ARVN compound and the Special Forces Camp on the northern side of the runway.

26 Sep: Troops A and B with the Squadron Commander departed LOC NINH at ~~0730~~ hours. A short road march was conducted to a release point where the Squadron deployed into the rubber. The Squadron conducted a reconnaissance in force through five predesignated check points. At CP 3 vicinity XU 632 107, the Squadron laagered to be resupplied by air and link up with 2d Bn, 9th Regt, 1st ARVN Inf Div, which became OFCON to the Quarterhorse for operations in vicinity of LOC NINH. After these two missions were accomplished, the task force moved from its laager reconnoitering thru CP's 4 and 5. At Check Point 5 (XU 727129) the Quarterhorse set up its RON position. Several bunkers and tunnel complexes were the only findings of the day.

27 Sep: The Squadron moved from its RON position, reconnoitering on line thru a new series of check points. At CP 3 vicinity XU 713 153, the Squadron laagered to receive resupply. At completion of resupply, the Squadron then continued thru CP's 4 and 5, the latter of which was the RON position for the Squadron, located vicinity XU 727128. The entire day passed with negative contact, although a 60mm mortar round, a butterfly bomb, a US 2.75 inch rocket and CHICOM grenade were found and blown in place.

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28 Sep: The Squadron moved out of their FON position at 0700 hours, moving north on a sweep toward two suspected enemy locations. At XU 738148, Troop A found 10 well constructed bunkers and two containers for RTG rounds. At XU 763155, Troop A found an old company size base camp. Numerous graves with NVA and VC bodies were found at XU 754167 by Troop B. All elements closed the FON position at 1900 hours. There was negative contact throughout the day.

29 Sep: The Squadron departed their FON position at 0715 hours to conduct RIF operations in another suspected, and one time known, enemy base camp area. At coordinates XU 741159 Troop B found a school house with pictures of American weapons and aircraft drawn on the walls. A map of the rubber plantation was found at this same location. The Squadron was resupplied at approximately 1150 hours and continued to conduct RIF operations until 1730. This day ended again with negative contact.

30 Sep: The 2-9th ARVN Infantry less one company was airlifted into a cold LZ vicinity XU 817119. The Battalion swept the village to the north of the LZ with negative results and then moved into a blocking position to the north of the village, while the Cavalry elements conducted a sweep moving toward the blocking position. At 1330 hours, the ARVNs reported engaging 6 VC running to their front at XU 818137. At 1458 hours, the ARVNs received fire from their rear at coordinates XU 825125. Contact was broken at 1500 hours. One RTG-2 and automatic weapons were fired at the ARVNs with negative casualties, friendly or enemy. A hunter killer team from 1-4 Cavalry was already on station, but obtained negative results. At 1714 hours, all elements closed the FON position and resupply position vicinity XU 800145.

1 Oct: The headquarters and two companies of 2-9th ARVN Inf were air lifted from the FON position to LOC NINH and to their base camp at CHAN THANH. The third company conducted a RIF with the Quarterhorse elements in search of a US MIA from 1-28th Inf in grid 7714. The reconnaissance was completed finding one RTG-7 round and booster, 2 CHICOM grenades, 24 M-79 rounds, 2 violet smoke grenades, 1 US .45 cal pistol (serial #2388783), 3 booby trapped bunkers, a mass grave about 8 x 11 x 4 feet with Vietnamese bodies, cooking equipment, a 250 pound bomb, a 500 pound bomb, a 1000 pound bomb, and numerous bunkers, all in grids 7714 and 7614. The Squadron closed LOC NINH at 1350 hours, were resupplied and prepared themselves to move to QUAN LOI the following morning. The remaining company of 2-9th ARVN Inf was then air lifted back to their base camp at CHAN THANH.

2 Oct: 1-4 Cav conducted a road march to vicinity of QUAN LOI RVN. The Squadron provided security for 8-6 Artillery and Headquarters, 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division from LOC NINH to QUAN LOI. The Squadron Headquarters moved into its CP in QUAN LOI Base Camp, while the Squadron Commander with Troops A and B and an attached company of the 3-9 ARVN Infantry moved into an FON position vicinity XT 742 820 at 1920 hours. The column received light sniper fire vicinity XT 758815, resulting in one US WHA. Fire was returned with negative known enemy casualties.

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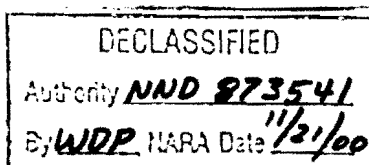
3 Oct: The Quarterhorse moved from its RON position to conduct a search and seal of the village of XA MINH DUC vicinity XT 720820. The seal was effected 030558 Oct 68. At 030815 Oct 68, additional District and RVN government officials joined the Squadron and conducted a search of the village. The results were as follows: 16 detainees, VC clothing, foot gear and documents. The seal was broken at 031230 Oct 68. Following the breaking of the seal, the elements conducted an RIF mission which took them thru their area of contact the day before. The Squadron then conducted a second seal on the village of XA THANH BINH vicinity XT 750658. The seal was effective 031619 Oct 68. There were 10 detainees who were taken to the National Police at AN LOI. The seal was broken 031755 Oct 68. The Squadron continued its RIF mission moving into an RON position with Co/3-9 ARVN Inf vicinity XT 736857.

4 Oct: At 0330 hours, the Squadron received a concentrated attack of mortar, RPG-7, RPG-2 and automatic weapons fire while in its RON position. The Squadron immediately returned fire with .50 cal, 90mm tank M-79 and small arms. The enemy broke contact at 0340 hours. This action resulted in 4 US KIA, 6 US WIA, 1 ARVN KIA and 2 ARVN WIA. A search of the battlefield was made at first light, revealing negative VC casualties. There were over 30 fins found from the RPG rounds fired at the position. Intelligence reports reveal a possible 6 VC KIA and 2 VC WIA. A Tracker Team was called in to aid the Squadron in finding the fleeing VC. A switch of ARVN companies was made. Co 11, 3-9th ARVN Infantry became OPCON until 9 October 1968. The Tracker Team picked up the trail, but soon lost it. The Squadron continued on with its RIF mission along a route they hoped would lead them to the retreating VC. At approximately 1230 hours, the Squadron made contact with an estimated VC squad vicinity coordinates XT 700348. Contact was lost at 1240 hours. Contact was made again at 1400 hours vicinity XT 698347. The results were as follows: 1 US KIA, 1 ARVN KIA, 1 ARVN WIA, and 5 VC KIA (BC) and 1 VC KIA (poss). In pursuing the contact, the Squadron was not able to obtain resupply in the field, so it returned to QUAN LOI Base Camp closing at 2118 hours where resupplies were waiting. The total results of the day were: 5 US KIA, 6 US WIA, 2 ARVN KIA, 3 ARVN WIA, 5 VC KIA (BC), 7 VC KIA (Poss) and 2 VC WIA (Poss). Captured equipment consisted of 2 AK-47's and 1 RPG-2 Launcher.

5 Oct: The Squadron remained at QUAN LOI Base Camp on a maintenance stand down. The Quarterhorse worked on their vehicles preparing for future missions. Memorial services were held that evening for the 5 deceased American soldiers.

6 Oct: The Squadron moved out at 0700 hours to conduct RIF operations in the area of the previous contact, search the village of LANG NAM vicinity XT 701838, and check the battlefield of the area of contact of 4 October 1968. At 060905 October 68 vicinity XT 718858, the Squadron made contact with well dug-in elements of an NVA company. The Cavalry attacked with direct fire and artillery support and completely overran the enemy positions, eliminating the last known defender. Contact was made again at 061339 Oct 1968 with dug in enemy vicinity XT 707849, and again the Squadron attacked completely through the bunker complex. In both contacts, the Cavalry was well supported by artillery. The results of the actions were: 1 US KIA, 7 US WIA, 1 ARVN KIA, 1 ARVN WIA, and 43 NVA KIA. Captured weapons included 11 AK-47's, 2 AK-50's, 3 RPG-2 launchers, 1 RPG-7 launcher, and assorted grenades. There were other weapons on the battlefield,

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but they had been destroyed by Cavalry and Artillery fire. US equipment damaged included one M113A1, declared a combat loss when it was hit by an RPG round. The Squadron continued its RIF operations trying to regain contact. In pursuing the contact, the mission of sweeping the village was not effected. The Squadron returned to QUAN LOI Base Camp at 2145 hours, where they were resupplied.

7 Oct: The Squadron departed QUAN LOI at 0800 hours with Co 11/3-9th ARVN Inf to conduct RIF operations in the area West of AN LOC, sweeping the areas of contact made the previous day and rechecking the battlefields. A recheck of the battlefield revealed 2 RPG-2 launchers. 3 AK magazines, numerous RPG rounds, 2 additional NVA KIA (BC), and miscellaneous NVA equipment. The two found NVA bodies brought the total enemy losses to 45 KIA for 6 October 1968. Ten new graves were found, and a check of one grave revealed that the NVA had been buried in plastic bags. After a police of the battlefield, the Squadron continued to conduct RIF operations. The "no-name" village vicinity XT 72202 was sealed and found to be empty, although it was evident that the village had been recently occupied. The elements returned to QUAN LOI Base Camp for resupply and maintenance at 071828 Oct 68.

8 Oct: 1-4 Cavalry continued its RIF operations with Co 11/3-9th ARVN Infantry attached, and this time moved South of QUAN LOI to search and seal the village of N 300 12N5, vicinity XT 838825. The seal was effective 000830 Oct 68 and the search revealed that NVA troops had been in the area recently. Fumi sticks were found placed between the rows of rubber vicinity XT 845837. After the seal was broken at 081105 Oct 68, the Squadron continued RIF operations finding numerous, well-maintained bunkers. The Squadron returned to QUAN LOI Base Camp at 1500 hours to prepare for a road march south to DI AN Base Camp. Impact awards were presented to US and ARVN soldiers by the Division Commander that afternoon after closing QUAN LOI. Memorial services were held at 1800 hours for the one deceased American soldier.

9 Oct: The Squadron departed QUAN LOI Base Camp at 0830 hours to conduct a road march to DI AN, the new home of the Quarterhorse. The Squadron was released from OPCON 1st Brigade at CF5 at approximately 091030 Oct 1968.

10. (C) RESULTS:

a. Friendly losses:

(1) US: KHA - 6

WHA - 14

(2) ARVN: KHA - 3

WHA - 3

b. Enemy losses:

(1) Personnel:

KIA (BC) - 50

KIA (Possible) - 7

WIA (Possible) - 2

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(2) Weapons:

AK-47 - 13 each

AK-50 - 2 each

RPG-2 - 7 each

RPG-7 - 1 each

11. (C) PERSONNEL AND LOGISTICS:

a. Personnel:

	Beginning of Operation	Termination of Operation
(1) Strength of 1-4 Cavalry		
Authorized	870	870
Assigned	873	861
Assigned/Attached	873/51 (930)	861/42 (903)
(2) Personnel in Field (PIF) C15/FM		
HQ Troop	15/93	13/96
A Troop	3/120	4/119
B Troop	4/140	4/127
(3) Personnel in Base Camp (PBC)		
HQ Troop	4/120	5/123
A Troop	1/30	1/22
B Troop	1/13	1/15

b. Logistics:

(1) Vehicle Combat Losses:

1 - M113M

(2) Ammunition Consumption:

90mm Cannister 270 rounds

90mm HE 12 rounds

.50 caliber 133,000 rounds

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7.62 caliber 108,000 rounds

5.56 caliber 25,000 rounds

M-79 936 rounds

LAWS 45 rounds

(3) Fuel Consumption:

Diesel 21,000 gallons

MOGAS 2,800 gallons

Oil 1,000

12. (C) COMMANDER'S ANALYSIS AND LESSONS LEARNED:

a. Attachment of ARVN units: Operations with the 2-9th ARVN Infantry Battalion in the LOC NINH area went very smoothly. After the first two days of operation, cross-attachment of ARVN companies to my two Cavalry Troops and a Cavalry Platoon of the Infantry Battalion (-) became the standard method of operation, with the battalion and the Squadron operating semi-independently under my control. In the AN LOC area, we had two different companies of the 3-9th Infantry Battalion attached, one at a time. The first company (the 9th) became demoralized after the night attack on our FON position, in which the company commander was wounded. It was replaced by the 11th Company, which remained with us throughout the rest of the operation, with two platoons attached to each of my troops. The 11th Company proved both useful and reasonably responsive. In fact, the two platoons with Troop A did an outstanding job during the heavy contact the morning of 6 October 1968. Problems which arose and which seem to me to be inherent in the situation of ARVN attached to US mechanized units were as follows:

(1) The command-control problem: It is important, from the viewpoint of responsiveness that the infantrymen attached to the American unit take their instructions (in the form of hand-and-arm signals) from the track commanders, since the American communications are superior to the ARVN communications. At the same time, I put each order out to the ARVN Company Commander, who relayed it by radio to his platoon leaders so that they could intelligently supervise execution of the order. Prior to my insistence on this dual channel of order issuance, the ARVN response was extremely slow.

(2) The Class I resupply problem: The ARVN soldiers were issued only rice, partly cooked and partly uncooked for three days. This was true both at LOC NINH and at AN LOC. In both cases, by the second day, the ARVN were demanding that they be issued some fish or meat supplement to go with the rice, and were begging rations from the Americans. Despite attempts by my S-4 to coordinate ARVN resupply with the Squadron resupply, no supplement was ever issued. In the end, we fed the ARVN soldiers as well as our own troops. Firm guidance should be issued to both sides in this area, as it became a morale problem to both the ARVN and the US soldiers.

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(3) The cooking problem: It was also necessary after the first day to allow time in the morning and evening during daylight hours so that the ARVN soldiers could build fires to cook their rice. This requirement reduced, to some extent, the time available for operations.

(4) The stamina problem: The ARVN soldier carries equipment equivalent to that carried by a US soldier. He is not as large, and he gives out quickly. Three days of reasonably hard work is all I was able to get of any of my ARVN Troops. (I believe this was partly the result of the fact that their recent operations had all been of one or two days duration).

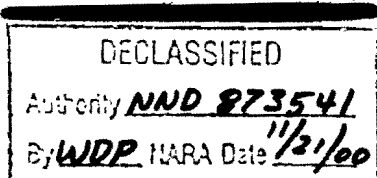
(5) The looting problem: The ARVN had the mission in each contact of following the tracks to insure that the enemy in all bunkers were dead. In addition, however, they systematically looted each body of weapons, wallets and equipment. We found it extremely difficult to retrieve the papers of intelligence value and even to get an accurate count of weapons found. This problem can be solved, but it must be anticipated.

b. Formations: Several of the standard formations - the line, the wedge, echelon and column - were used effectively in the rubber. The determining criteria were the spacing of the rubber trees (old rubber being more widely spaced allowed greater variation) and the enemy situation (in both of our heavy contacts we were able to move into a well oriented line because of the depth of our formation when initial contact was made).

c. RON versus NDF: I determined at the outset not to work from an NDF, but to RON wherever we finished operating each day. This method of operation, coupled with the resupply system discussed below, enabled us to cover more territory and to be relatively independent of the restrictions imposed by the few available areas suitable for resupply by air. In only one case were we hit at night, and this was the result, I believe, of establishing the RON position on a crossroad (even though it was not shown as a crossroad on the map).

d. Resupply: Resupply was conducted by air, when necessary, sometime during the middle of the day, through the expedient of orienting our operation so that we hit a clearing at the proper time. However, we ran into difficulties twice when we were unable to hit the clearing at the planned time. In one case, the resupply had to be aborted. Resupply by road was planned and conducted, also near mid-day, whenever possible. In this manner, we were able to avoid the "logistical tail wagging the operational dog".

e. Recovery: The nature of the terrain, the characteristics of the rubber, and the wet condition of the ground, as well as the limited time permitted for maintenance, resulted in several recovery and suspension system problems which inevitably slowed down the pace of the operations. These problems are bound to arise, and since there is no front, downed vehicles must be secured until they rejoin the formation or while they are evacuated. It is necessary, therefore, to have flexible plans for each day's operation which can be modified depending on the number and difficulty of the recovery problems encountered.

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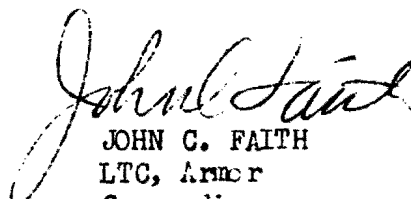
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f. Maintenance time: The Squadron operated for two weeks with only one and one-half days of stand down for maintenance. We knew we were to be in the AN LOC -LOC NINH area for a limited time only and did not ask for more maintenance time because of our desire to thoroughly cover the area and find the enemy. We returned with all equipment under its own power except for two tanks left at QUAN LOI and one truck towed into DI AN. However, we could not have sustained the pace of operations any longer than we did without significant communications and mechanical failures. For sustained operations over a longer period of time, an absolute minimum of two consecutive days stand down per week is essential. For maximum efficiency this stand down should preferably be conducted in a secure area so that major work can be accomplished.

g. Overall evaluation: The Squadron proved capable of meeting every demand placed on it, of operating in unfamiliar territory independent of an NDP, of resupplying itself efficiently, and of carrying heavy contact through to a successful conclusion without permitting a break of contact by the enemy. I only wish I could have had Troop C with me, also.


JOHN C. FAITH
LTC, Armor
Commanding

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