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Box 47

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
Headquarters, 1st Battalion (Mech) 5th Infantry  
APO San Francisco 96225

AVDCSM-S2

15 September 1969

SUBJECT: Combat After Action Interview Report

Commanding General  
25th Infantry Division  
ATTN: Division Historian  
APO San Francisco 96225

1. Organization: Scout Platoon, Flame Platoon, and Company C, 1st Battalion (Mechanized) 5th Infantry, 25th Infantry Division, APO San Francisco 96225.
2. Date: 211215 to 211800 August 1969
3. Location: XT 549195, Map Vietnam, 1:50,000
4. Control Headquarters: Headquarters, 1st Battalion (Mechanized) 5th Infantry.
5. Persons interviewed: See Annex A
6. Interviewing Officer: Captain Randall L. Yeargan, S-2, 1st Battalion (Mechanized) 5th Infantry.
7. Task Organization: Scout Platoon, Flame Platoon, and Company C, 1st Battalion (Mechanized) 5th Infantry.
8. Supporting Forces: S-5 Section, 1st Battalion (Mechanized) 5th Infantry, Battery C, 1st Battalion, 8th Artillery, Light Fire Team, D Troop, 3rd Squadron, 4th Cavalry, U.S. Air Force FAG.
9. Background Information: The Scout Platoon and C Company were engaged in individual reconnaissance-in-force missions as part of the 1st Bn (M) 5th Inf mission of securing Vietnamese National Highway # 1 from XT 700088 to XT 443225 within the 2d Brigade, 25th Infantry Division Tactical Area of Responsibility. At the time of the contact, C Company had completed its mission and had returned to the Battalion Fire Support Base Devin at XT 548180.
10. Intelligence: Cu Chi District Intelligence agencies reported that C-15 VC local force company had been working in the vicinity. On 19 August,

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the AN/PPS-5 Radar at FSB Devin had picked up a reading of 8 to 9 persons at XT 559196. On 20 August, the radar recorded 2 to 3 persons at XT 549159. Also, on the night of 20 August 1969, an Infrared detection mission, flown for the 25th Infantry Division, detected heavy emissions at XT 552182. Based on this information, the Scout Platoon was assigned its mission.

11. Mission: Beginning at 0800 hours on 21 August 1969, the Scout Platoon, with one mechanized flamethrower attached, conducts a reconnaissance-in-force from XT 504192 to XT 515192 to XT 523190 to XT 531188 to XT 537186 to 540180 and return to FSB Devin.

12. Concept of Operation and Execution:

a. At approximately 0800 hours the Scout Platoon, moving in a modified column formation, discovered four tunnels along a hedgerow at XT 549192. Each of the tunnels showed signs of recent occupancy, because of their fresh camouflage and the dirt scuffed into them from their entrances. There was nothing in them, so they were destroyed with C-4 charges. Searching further, a deserted house within fifty meters of the tunnel yielded a 200 pound bag of polished rice, which was later destroyed. Because such a large amount of polished rice is not usually found in a simple farm dwelling, and never in a deserted one, the Scouts began their search in earnest, and spread on line to approach the next hedgerow, approximately 300 meters to the north of the house.

b. As they approached the hedgerow mounted, a scout saw an individual in blue clothing and carrying a weapon jump up from a concealed location in the high grass and run into the hedgerow. When this was reported to LT Ward, he ordered his two right flank personnel carriers to move around the eastern edge of the hedgerow and attempt to engage the individual from the other side. This was done quickly, and the flank track reported that there was no sign of the individual having emerged from the hedgerow. LT Ward then ordered the attached flame thrower to engage the hedgerow. When this was done, an individual, in flames, jumped from a hole approximately fifteen meters east of where the first man had disappeared and ran into the rice paddy to its north, where the flank track killed him with .50 caliber machine gun fire.

c. At this point, LT Ward was aware that there were more than one individual involved in the area, and ordered a cautious approach to the burned area, maintaining his rough "L" formation. Two men dismounted from each track to approach the hedgerow on foot under the watchful eyes of the APC crews. One man recovered an AK-47 rifle from the hole which the burned VC had occupied, and another VC was found burned to death in his hole. As the search progressed, another man jumped from the hedgerow to the west of the searchers, and ran into the dense vegetation near the stream amid a hail of bullets from the overwatching APC's.

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d. LT Ward, apprehensive lest more of the enemy appear on his left flank, pulled his troops back approximately 300 meters from the hedgerow with the APC's on line, and began reconning by fire. He contacted Major Baker, the Battalion S-3, advised him of the situation and requested assistance in the search. Major Baker responded by requesting a napalm strike to remove as much of the hedgerows as possible, and a light fire team to scout the area before any further attempts at search were made. He also ordered C Company, which was at FSB Devin, and the remainder of the flame platoon (two mechanized flame throwers) to proceed to the contact area. While awaiting reinforcement, the 24 man scout element was to place artillery fire into the hedgerows.

e. LT Ward began adjusting artillery fire from Battery C, 1st Bn, 8th Artillery on the hedgerow, after first moving his platoon back until it was approximately 500 meters from it, in order to avoid the splash of his own supporting fires. As he did so, he began receiving small arms fire from his left flank, and turned two of his APC's in that direction to suppress it with their .50 caliber machine guns. The enemy fire ceased, however the scouts kept it under surveillance until C Company arrived to assume the left flank of the formation.

f. By the time Major Baker, Captain Springer, the Battalion S-5, and the flame tanks arrived on the scene, a line of APC's with C Company on the left and the scouts on the right had been formed, with approximately twenty five meters between vehicles. All vehicles covered the hedgerow 500 meters to their north. A flight of two F-4 fighters each armed with two napalm and two 500 pound high drag bombs reported on station. After the artillery fire had been shifted to the west, the planes, controlled by a 2d Brigade Forward Air Controller, began bombing the hedgerow. The first plane dropped napalm slightly off target, and the second plane dropped a 500 pound bomb. When the bomb exploded, a VC emerged from a spider hole hiding position covered by a trap door approximately 100 meters in front of the line of APC's. He was engaged by several riflemen from C Company and killed.

g. Following the airstrike, a light fire team consisting of one LOH and one Cobra Gunship reported on station. As the line of troops moved forward to search the contact area, the LOH engaged one VC fleeing north from the hedgerow with its M-60 machine gun and killed him. Approximately fifty meters from the hedgerow, the personnel carriers were halted while the infantry continued forward to search the hedgerow on foot. At this time, despite intermittent suppressive fire being directed into the bush, a burst of AK fire was placed on the advancing C Company dismounts. From three different spider holes, two between the fourth and fifth APC's on the left flank and one between the carriers and the troops, AK fire and the lifting of trap doors to throw grenades alerted the company to more underground VC. As these targets were being attacked by hand grenades, a rocket propelled grenade (RPG-2) was fired, destroying a personnel carrier on C Company's right flank, and in the center of the formation. One soldier on the APC had risen to throw a hand grenade into a spider

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hole when the concussion knocked him from the track. As he fell, the grenade rolled free and exploded, inflicting minor wounds on C Company's forward observer and his radio-telephone operator. In the face of the RPG fire to the front and renewed automatic weapons fire from the left as well as the exploding ammunition from the now burning APC, Major Baker ordered the formation to withdraw while the Cobra gunship of the light fire team expended its rockets and 40mm grenades on the hedgerow.

h. Before advancing on the hedgerow again, Major Baker ordered the three flame tracks forward (the original had been sent to FSB Devin, re-fueled, and returned to the scene of action). They spread their tongues of fire to encompass most of the hedgerow area and a good portion of the brush on the right side of the objective. When the flames had died, once again the mechanized troops advanced, this time taking the precaution of throwing grenades into each of the spider holes which had been discovered before while keeping a heavy volume of automatic weapons fire directed to their left flank. They met no further resistance as they policed up the battlefield.

## 13. Results:

## a. U.S. Losses:

2 U.S. WIA  
1 M113A1 Personnel Carrierw/equipment destroyed.

## b. Enemy Losses:

13 VC KIA (10 by ground troops; 3 by air)  
5 AK-47 Rifles captured  
1 RPG-2 Launcher captured  
2 Pounds documents captured  
2 Pounds medical supplies captured  
1 ChiCom field pack with 2 VC blue uniforms captured  
1 CBU destroyed  
200 Pounds rice destroyed  
15 Bunkers (8' X 10') destroyed  
6 Spider holes (2' X 3' X 6') destroyed

## c. Unit Strength by Grade:

## (1) Scout Platoon:

1 O-2  
1 E-6  
2 E-5  
10 E-4  
7 E-3

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## (2) C Company (Less Mortar Platoon):

1 O-3  
 2 O-2  
 1 O-1  
 1 E-8  
 2 E-7  
 5 E-6  
 10 E-5  
 43 E-4  
 17 E-3  
 2 E-2

## (3) Flame Platoon:

1 E-6  
 2 E-5  
 2 E-4  
 1 E-3

## d. Material:

## (1) Class I:

NONE

## (2) Class III:

Diesel - 485 gallons

## (3) Class IV:

21 M113A1 Personnel Carriers w/equipment  
 78 M-16 Rifles  
 8 M-79 Grenade Launchers  
 15 M-60 Machine Guns  
 1 OH6A Helicopter  
 1 Cobra Helicopter  
 1 OV-10 Aircraft  
 2 F-4 Fighters  
 6 M102 Howitzers (105mm)  
 3 Mechanized Flame Throwers

## (4) Class V:

400 Gallons, Napalm  
 4 Napalm Bombs  
 4 500 pound High Drag Bombs  
 400 Rounds, Aerial, 40mm Grenades  
 100 Hand Grenades (Est)

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6,000 Rounds, 5.56 Ammunition (Est)  
4,000 Rounds, .50 Caliber Ammunition (Est)  
2,000 Rounds, 7.62 Ammunition (Est)

## 14. Analysis:

a. The radar sightings, verified by the infra-red emissions, indicated the true target.

b. Because of their obviously superior concealment, the enemy force may never have been located if one of them had not been sighted breaking cover.

c. Enemy entrenchments gave them initially superior protection against even bombs, artillery, rockets, and fire. If the vegetation had not been reduced by these weapons, however, their locations may never have been made available to grenade and small arms attack.

d. The enemy "L" shaped defenses were only overcome by constant firepower.

e. The enemy route of escape into the rice paddy was effectively sealed by helicopter gunships.

RONNALL L. YEARGAN  
Captain, Armor  
Battalion Historian

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