

HEADQUARTERS 3D BRIGADE
4TH INFANTRY DIVISION
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96268

AVDDC-CO

1 April 1967

SUBJECT: Recommendation for the Presidential Unit Citation

THRU: Commanding General
25th Infantry Division
APO SF 96225

THRU: Commanding General
II Field Force
APO SF 96266

TO: Commanding General
United States Army, Viet Nam
APO SF 96307

1. The Presidential Unit Citation is recommended for the 3d Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, and all assigned and attached units (see Enclosure 2), for their actions on 21 March 1967.

2. On 19 March 1967 elements of the 3d Brigade made an opposed airmobile assault into a small clearing near the abandoned village of Suoi Tre in central War Zone C, Republic of Viet Nam, at coordinates XT385708. Their mission was to establish a Fire Support Base at the location of the air landing to support further offensive operations. The Fire Support Base was code named "Gold" after the code name of the landing zone. By late afternoon on 19 March the 2d Bn 77th Artillery (105mm) had been airlifted into position. On 20 March the 2d Bn 12th Inf, under the command of LTC Joe F. Elliot, had moved west on a search and destroy mission against Viet Cong forces suspected to be in the area. Less than two battalions of U. S. Troops now remained at Fire Support Base Gold, the 3d Bn 22d Inf (minus Company C), commanded by LTC John A. Bender, and the 2d Bn, 77th Artillery, commanded by LTC Jack Vessey. Total complement of U. S. troops at Fire Support Base Gold was less than 450. To the south, the 2d Bn 22d Inf (M) under the command of LTC Ralph Julian, and the 2d Bn 34th Armor (minus company B) under the command of LTC Raymond L. Stailey were attempting to cross the Suoi Samat River and join the 2d Bn 12th Inf in an offensive sweep to the west. During the afternoon of 20 March the Brigade Commander observed 30 – 35 Viet Cong 2,000 meters southwest at Fire Support Base Gold. The enemy was engaged with artillery and all units were alerted to the possibility of enemy activity.

3. At first light on 21 March 1967, in accordance with standing operating procedures, a stand-to was conducted in FSB Gold and a security patrol from 3d Bn, 22d Inf began a sweep of the perimeter. This action prematurely triggered an attack on

FSB Gold which subsequently proved to be the largest single attack and the most catastrophic enemy defeat of the war to date.

4. As the security patrol moved to sweep the perimeter, the enemy force began a heavy mortar attack at 0640 hours followed minutes later by a ground assault from the north, east, and south. This enemy force was later determined to be approximately 2,500 men strong, composed of three battalions of the 272d VC Main Force Regiment reinforced by two attritional battalions, and supported by the U-80 Artillery Regiment. The mortar attack consisted of some 500-700 rounds of both 60mm and 82mm. At Brigade Headquarters, thirteen thousand meters southwest, an alert that FSB Gold was under attack was relayed to all elements of the Brigade. B Btry, 3/13 Arty (115 SP), C Btry 1/8 Arty (105mm), B Btry, 2/32 Arty (8-inch and 175mm), B Btry, 2/35 Arty (155 SP), all located within supporting distance of FSB Gold, commenced firing preplanned defensive fires into every clearing large enough for the enemy to use as a mortar position around Fire Support Base Gold. The Brigade Commander, Colonel Marshall B. Garth, and the Brigade Sergeant Major, AMG Bill V. Woods, boarded the only available aircraft, an OH 23-G helicopter, and flew from Soui Da to the scene of the battle. Simultaneously, the Forward Air Controller from Dau Tieng and fighter pilots from Bien Hoa Airbase scrambled their aircraft. Less than 20 minutes from the impact of the first mortar round, the small force at FSB Gold was engaged in a bitter, hand-to-hand struggle with the enemy.

5. The situation inside FSB Gold had by this time become so critical that howitzers within the perimeter were lowered to fire directly into the waves of advancing enemy soldiers. The tenaciously held perimeter of the Fire Support Base had been penetrated in the north and southeast by 0751 hours. During this penetration the enemy succeeded in overrunning and destroying one M-55 Quad .50 caliber machine gun and actually penetrating one of the howitzer positions. The other Quad .50 MG had been destroyed by an anti-tank round during the initial attack. In all, two howitzers were totally destroyed by mortar and anti-tank rounds, and nine others were damaged. In addition, many of the more than 500 RPG-II anti-tank rounds which were fired into the support base landed in the ammunition stores. In spite of the withering small arms fire and the exploding stores of 105mm ammunition, the gun crews remained at their guns, cannibalizing the destroyed howitzers to keep the damaged ones firing. Crew members from destroyed guns carried ammunition and stepped in to fill vacancies as casualties occurred in the operation crews. All cooks, clerks, and other available personnel of the artillery battalion which had been formed into a preplanned reaction force, now moved to block the penetration of the infantry's perimeter. By this time the infantry soldiers on the perimeter of the FSB who were subjected to the brunt of the assault were fighting from isolated positions as the determined enemy force penetrated and encircled the U.S. defensive positions. Small elements of the U. S. soldiers fighting fiercely in hand-to-hand combat continued to resist the assaulting enemy. As the fighting intensified and ammunition stocks depleted friendly troops reacted quickly to the situation, seizing weapons and ammunition from the dead and wounded enemy. During the course of the action, the penetrating Viet Cong threatened the Command Post of the 3d Battalion, 22d Infantry and the Fire Direction Center of the 2d Battalion, 77th Artillery. These positions were successfully defended, however, and the enemy assault was repulsed after suffering numerous casualties. Twenty-six dead Viet Cong soldiers were found within 50 meters of the artillery Fire Direction Center. By the time the relief force reached the scene of the battle it was estimated that over half of the troops on the eastern portion of

the perimeter had exhausted their own ammunition and were using captured AK-47's and Chicom carbines.

6. Meanwhile, two defensive ambush patrols from 3d Bn, 22d Inf, composed of 15 men from Company A, 3d Bn, 22d Infantry at XT384709 and 12 men from Company B, 3d Bn, 22d Infantry at XT388702 reported "hundreds" of Viet Cong all around their positions. The patrols were told to remain in their ambush sites and move back to the perimeter at the first opportunity. Prior to their withdrawal they reported enemy carrying parties pulling "hundreds" of dead and wounded VC to the rear. Both patrols eventually made it back to the perimeter, however nearly half their original number were either dead or wounded.

7. Air strikes were called in on the outskirts of the perimeter and all supporting artillery units were firing final protective fires around the support base. Nearly 4,100 rounds of varying caliber were used in the accomplishment of their mission. When the Forward Air Controller directing U.S. fighter planes was shot down by enemy antiaircraft weapons, another plane was made available at Dau Tieng and a replacement FAC was on station within minutes.

8. Alerted at 0655 hours and ordered to move to the aid of the beleaguered defenders of FSB Gold, the 2/12 Inf, 2/22d Inf (M), and 2/34 Armor pressed on from positions as far away as 3,000 meters. As they started to move, the 2d Bn 12th Inf was subjected to heavy concentrations of enemy mortar fire in an attempt to delay their progress. Treating their wounded on the move, the 2d Bn 12th Inf continued to push on through 2,500 meters of heavy bamboo and underbrush toward their objective at FSB Gold. Harassed by sniper fire and blocked by security elements of the enemy's main attack force, the 2d Bn 12th Inf continued to advance, moving the 2,500 meters overland through dense jungle against a determined enemy in less than two hours. The first elements of the 2d Bn, 12th Inf entered the southwestern part of the perimeter minutes before the mechanized elements arrived at 0900 hours.

9. For the 2/22d Inf (M) and the 2/34th Armor, the order to reinforce meant crossing the Suoi Samat River which had already halted their advance for 24 hours while they searched for a suitable crossing site the previous day. The success of the enemy effort was dependent upon this natural obstacle to prevent the reinforcement of FSB Gold. Realizing the urgency of the situation, a personnel carrier was quickly brought forward with the idea of sinking it in the river to serve as an expedient bridge for the remaining elements. Meanwhile, A Co, 2/22d Inf (M), attached to the 2/34th Armor, located a possible crossing site and had pushed one APC across. The first armored vehicle reached the far side of the river at approximately 0745 hours. The lighter Personnel Carriers were pushed through first and the heavier tanks of the 2d Bn, 34th Armor brought up the rear.

10. Having been repulsed on their first attempt to overrun the FSB, the enemy mortared the objective once again and launched a second determined ground assault. This second assault was interrupted as mechanized columns of the 2/22d Inf (M) and foot elements of the 2/12th Inf almost simultaneously broke into the clearing at 0900 hours, trapping the enemy in a murderous crossfire. The 2/34th Armor was trailing, and swept in immediately behind the mechanized battalion. Both the mechanized and armored elements passed through the 2d Bn, 12th Inf and swept around the southern and eastern half of the FSB while enemy troops swarmed over the APC's. The heavy

guns of the tanks were firing direct fire at point blank range into the teeming mass of troops as the enemy panicked and attempted to flee. After the mechanized units assisted in breaking the force of the attack in the eastern and southern flanks, the 2d Bn, 12th Inf moved in on the west and northwest, sweeping the entire perimeter and neutralizing the small remaining pockets of resistance. The full force of available air and artillery support was brought to bear against the Viet Cong force which was now desperately trying to break contact.

11. At 0931 hours, during the first lull in the fighting, with dazed VC still wandering inside the perimeter, the Brigade Commander directed his UH1-D Command ship to land in the center of the battle area. Without hesitation, Colonel Garth directed that his helicopter be used to evacuate the wounded while he remained at FSB Gold to personally direct the conduct of the action.

12. Behind the scene of the fighting in Suoi Tre there was another kind of battle going on, one that drew on the resources and ingenuity of all support personnel in the Brigade. All available ammunition stores for both howitzers and small arms were rapidly being depleted. Thousands of meters away, at Dau Tieng Base Camp, at Suoi Da, and at Tay Ninh, the support and service elements of the Brigade were moving and loading tons of ammunition on UH1-d and CH-47 helicopters which flew, in spite of a heavy could cover, to begin the tedious and dangerous task of resupplying ammunition to the engaged units. At FSB Bronze, the primary support base for FSB Gold, the first resupply of howitzer ammunition was airlifted in minutes before the last on-hand round was slammed into the breech of a howitzer of C Btry, 1st Bn, 8th Arty.

13. By 1145 hours the intensity of the fight had tapered off and there remained only the slow task of clearing the battlefield. The scope of the battle was so vast that five days later security and ambush patrols from FSB Gold found weapons and bodies, and captured wounded prisoners up to 1500 meters away.

14. In just over five hours of intense fighting the 3d Brigade, 4th Infantry Division used the following amounts of ordnance:

2/77 Arty	2,200 rounds of 105mm He 40 rounds of 105mm Beehive
C, 1/8 Arty	1,008 rounds of 105mm HE
B, 3/13 Arty	357 rounds of 105mm HE
B, 2/35 Arty	357 rounds of 105mm HE
B, 2/32 Arty	22 rounds 175mm; 20 rounds 8 inch
7 th Air Force (14 immediate missions consisting of 31 sorties along the perimeter of FSB Gold; additional missions were flown in pursuit of the withdrawing Viet Cong)	34 tons of ordnance, not including 20mm used in strafing runs

15. The infantry units in contact used approximately 90% of the two basic loads, carried by all the units, of small arms ammunition, grenades, claymores, 81mm and 4.2 inch mortar ammunition.

16. Total U. S. casualties for the battle of Suoi Tre were 31 KIA and 187 wounded in action, 92 of which were evacuated. The remaining wounded were treated on the scene and returned to duty. By mid-afternoon of 21 March all U. S. personnel were accounted for with none missing or captured.

17. Enemy killed numbered 647 by body count. Ten prisoners, to include one wounded prisoner found two days later, were captured. Two of the prisoners later died of wounds. From the patrol reports of the 2d Bn 22d Infantry and interrogation of prisoners and defectors, it was conservatively estimated that at least 200 more of the enemy were killed and evacuated.

18. Analysis of the enemy actions of 21 March 1967 indicate an intent to conduct a ground attack against the 2d Battalion, 12th Infantry immediately following the mortar attack on that unit. Only the early commitment of the 2d Battalion, 12th Infantry prevented the ground attack. The entire movement of the battalion was subjected to continuous sniper fire from the north flank. The presence of the great numbers of anti-tank weapons further indicated that the Viet Cong expected a quick "roll-up" of Fire Support Base Gold followed by an engagement with the mechanized forces. In spite of a heavy preponderance of automatic and anti-tank weapons, the Viet Cong force was so thoroughly defeated that the mechanized forces suffered only two slightly wounded personnel. Not one M-113 armored personnel carrier or M48A3 tank was struck by anti-tank fire during the course of the engagement.

MARSHALL B. GARTH
Colonel, Infantry
Commanding

HEADQUARTERS 3D BRIGADE
4TH INFANTRY DIVISION
APO San Francisco 96268

AVDDC-A

29 March 1967

1. Significant enemy weapons and ammunition captured during the battle of Suoi Tre:

<u>a. WEAPON</u>	<u>NUMBERED CAPTURED</u>
RPG-2	50
LMG	30
AK-47	49
US Browning Auto Rifle	13
US M-14	5
SKS Carbine	12
Chicom 7.92 Rifle	13
US M-79 Grenade Launcher	2
US 12-gauge shotgun	3
Pistol P-38	3
US Rifle, M-1	10

b. AMMUNITION

31,000 rounds of small arms ammunition
1,900 stick grenades
580 rounds of RPG-2 ammunition
40 rounds of 75mm Recoilless Rifle ammunition
28 rounds of 57mm Recoilless Rifle ammunition
21 DH-10 claymore mines
8 DH-2 claymore mines

2. Intelligence summary of enemy situation at time of the battle:

- a. Approximately 2,300 pounds of assorted Viet Cong equipment and web gear were collected and destroyed during an after battle police of the battle area.
- b. Based on information from captured documents and statements from prisoners of war, it has been determined that 3d Brigade forces were attacked by the 27d main force Viet Cong Regiment and two additional Viet Cong battalions. This attack was supported by elements of the U-80 Artillery Regiment. Prisoner of war interrogation reports revealed the average strength of each battalion to have been approximately 400

men. The attacking VC force was well armed and possessed large quantities of ammunition. Captured weapons were in excellent operation condition, and in many instances, were new.

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4TH INFANTRY DIVISION
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AVDDC-A

29 March 1967

1. Enemy and friendly casualties sustained in the battle of Soui Tre:

a. FRIENDLY:

United States troops killed in action:	33
United States troops wounded in action:	187
United States troops missing in action:	0

b. ENEMY:

Viet Cong killed in action (body count):	647
Viet Cong killed in action (possible):	200
Viet Cong captured:	10
Viet Cong suspects detained:	0

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AVDDG-A

30 March 1967

Supporting Units during the battle of Soui Tre:

ARTILLERY:

<u>UNIT</u>	<u>POSITION</u>	<u>ROUNDS FIRED</u>	<u>COMMAND RELATIONSHIP</u>
B Btry, 2d Bn, 35 th Arty (155mm SP)	XT281684	357	General Support
B Btry, 2d Bn, 32d Arty (8" & 175mm)	XT344577	8" – 20 175mm – 22	General Support, Reinforcing

US AIR FORCE:

7TH Air Force – 14 immediate missions consisting of 31 sorties.

OTHER AIRCRAFT SUPPORT:

Light Fire Team – 335th Combat Assault Helicopter Company
Light Fire Team – D Trp, 3d Sq, 4th Cav (4 AC)
116th Combat Assault Helicopter Company (9 AC plus 1 Light Fire Team)
3 – CH47 – 178th Combat Assault Support Helicopter Company
1 – CH47 – 213th Combat Assault Support Helicopter Company
Co A, 25th Avn Bn (2 Aircraft)
Dustoff (Exact designation unknown)

HEADQUARTERS, 3D BRIGADE
4TH INFANTRY DIVISION
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AVDDC-A

30 March 1967

Task Organization, 3d Brigade, 4th Infantry Division – 21 March 1967

Bde Control

HHC, 3d Bde
Co C, 4th Engr Bn (-)
2d Plat, Trp C, 1st Sq, 10th Cav
4th Section, 1st Platoon, Btry D, 5th Bn, 2d Arty (Duster)

TASK FORCE TANKER

2d Bn, 34th Armor (-)
Co C, 2d Bn, 34th Armor
Co A, 2d Bn, 22d Inf (M)

2d Bn, 77th Artillery (Reinforced)

Btry C, 1st Bn, 8th Artillery (105mm)
Btry B, 3d Bn, 13th Artillery (155 SP)
1st & 4th Squads, 4th Section, Btry D, 71st Arty (Quad 50)
3d Section, 1st Platoon, Btry D, 5th Bn, 2d Arty (Duster)

Bde Rear

Troop C, 1st Sq, 10th Cav (-)
44th Infantry Platoon, Scout Dog (-)
3d Platoon, 4th MP Co
20th Public Information Det
10th AA Plat, 24 CA Company
Tm, 246th Psyops Co
3d Support Bn (Prov)
3d S&T Co (Prov)
Co B, 704th Maint Bn
Co D, 4th Medical Bn

TASK FORCE FULLBACK

2d Bn, 22d Infantry (M) (-)
Co B, 2d Bn, 22d Inf (M)
Co C, 2d Bn, 22d Inf (M)
Co A, 2d Bn, 22d Inf (M) 34th Armor
Squad, 44th IPSD
3 Teams, Co C, 4th Engr Bn

3d Bn, 22d Infantry
Squad, 44th IPSD

2d Bn, 12th Infantry
Squad, 44th IPSD

The Presidential Unit Citation is awarded by
direction of the President of the United States to:

THE 3D BRIGADE, 4TH INFANTRY DIVISION
AND
ASSIGNED AND ATTACHED UNITS

HEADQUARTERS COMPANY, 3D BRIGADE, 4TH INFANTRY DIVISION
2D BATTALION, 12TH INFANTRY
2D BATTALION, 22D INFANTRY (MECHANIZED)
3D BATTALION, 22D INFANTRY
2D BATTALION, 77TH ARTILLERY
2D BATTALION, 34TH ARMOR
HEADQUARTERS COMPANY, 2D BATTALION, 34TH ARMOR
COMPANY A, 2D BATTALION, 34TH ARMOR
COMPANY C, 2D BATTALION, 34TH ARMOR
44TH INFANTRY PLATOON, SCOUT DOG
COMPANY C, 4TH ENGINEER BATTALION
BATTERY C, 1ST BATTALION, 8TH ARTILLERY (105mm)
BATTERY B, 3D BATTALION, 13TH ARTILLERY (155 SP)
1ST AND 4TH SQUADS, 4TH SECTION BATTERY D, 71ST ARTILLERY (QUAD 50)
3D AND 4TH SECTIONS, 1ST PLATOON, BATTERY D, 5TH BATTALION,
2D ARTILLERY (DUSTER)
C TROOP, 1ST SQUADRON, 10TH CAVALRY
TEAM, 246TH PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS COMPANY
3D SUPPORT BATTALION (PROVISIONAL)
3D S & T COMPANY (PROVISIONAL)
COMPANY B, 704TH MAINTENANCE BATTALION
COMPANY D, 4TH MEDICAL BATTALION
20TH PUBLIC INFORMATION DETACHMENT
10TH AA PLATOON, 2D CIVIL AFFAIRS COMPANY
3D PLATOON, 2D CIVIL AFFAIRS COMPANY
3D PLATOON, 4TH MILITARY POLICE COMPANY
COMPANY C, 588TH ENGINEER BATTALION
19TH TACTICAL AIR SUPPORT SQUADRON
FOR
EXTRAORDINARY HEROISM

The 3d Brigade, 4th Infantry Division and the Attached and Assigned Units distinguished themselves by extraordinary heroism while engaged in military operations on 21 March 1967 in the vicinity of SUOI TRE, Republic of Viet Nam. The members of this Brigade and the foregoing units demonstrated indomitable courage and professional skill while engaging an estimated force of approximately 2500 Viet Cong. During the early morning hours of 21 March 1967, an estimated force of 2500 Viet Cong launched a massive and determined ground attack against elements of the 3d Battalion, 22d Infantry and 2d Battalion, 77th Artillery located at Fire Support Base Gold near Suoi Tre, Republic of Viet Nam. Opening the engagement with an intense mortar attack, the enemy force,

later identified as the 272d Main Force Regiment, reinforced by two additional infantry battalions, struck the perimeter in three separate location.

Due to the ferocity of the assault and the overwhelming number of enemy troops, untenable positions in the north and south-east were overrun within the first 30 minutes of the battle despite determined resistance by friendly forces. As the enemy penetrated the perimeter, the American troops set up an interim perimeter and continued to direct withering fire on the enemy. When the Viet Cong directed anti-tank fire upon the artillery positions, heroic gun crews cannibalized parts from damaged guns, and, at several points, fired directly into the advancing enemy including the firing of "bee-hive" ammunition through gaps in the perimeter.

While the battle continued to rage and grow in intensity, the Brigade Commander was directing the 2d Battalion, 12th Infantry, the 2d Battalion, 22d Infantry (Mechanized) and the 2d Battalion, 34th Armor, to the besieged fire support base. At the same time, the support and service elements of the brigade began a furious aerial resupply of ammunition and medical supplies from the Brigade Rear base camp at Dau Tieng.

As the 2d Battalion, 12th Infantry began its overland move to the fire support base approximately 2,500 meters distant, a heavy concentration of enemy mortar fire was directed upon their position, killing one man and wounding 20 others. Undaunted, the battalion moved nearly 2,500 meters in less than two hours despite constant blocking and harassment efforts by the enemy. Concurrently with the movement of the 2d Battalion, 12th Infantry, mechanized and armor elements began moving across the Suoi Samat River at a ford which had only recently been located and which previously had been thought impassable.

Driving towards the fire support base, the mechanized unit followed by the armor battalion, drove into the western sector of the engaged perimeter passing through engaged elements of the 2d Battalion, 12th Infantry. Striking the Viet Cong on the flank, the 2d Battalion, 22d Infantry smashed through the enemy with such intensity and ferocity that the enemy attack faltered and broke. As the fleeing and now shattered enemy force retreated to the north-east, the 2d Battalion, 34th Armor swept the position destroying large numbers of Viet Cong who were now in full retreat.

Throughout the battle, fighters of the United States Air Force, directed by the Brigade's Forward Air Controllers, provided close support to the fire support base and hammered enemy concentrations outside the perimeter. As the FAC aircraft dived through heavy anti-aircraft fire to mark enemy positions, the plane was hit by ground fire and crashed killing both occupants.

After securing the fire support base, a sweep of the area was conducted, revealing a total of 647 Viet Cong bodies and 10 enemy captured. It is estimated that an additional 200 enemy were killed as a result of the aerial and artillery bombardment. Friendly casualties were extremely light, resulting in only 33 killed and 187 wounded of whom approximately 90 were returned to duty.

Through their fortitude and determination, the personnel of the 3d Brigade, 4th Infantry Division and attached units were able in great measure to cripple a large Viet Cong Force. Their devotion to duty and extraordinary heroism reflect distinct credit upon themselves and the Armed Forces of the United States