

3rd Brigade Kills 81 Enemy In Task Force Oregon Battle

DUC PHO — Following artillery preparation, 18 air strikes and naval gunfire, infantrymen from the 3rd Brigade Task Force, 25th Division recently assaulted battered enemy positions and finished off what remained of an estimated North Vietnamese battalion.

After a day and a half of fierce fighting, which left the battlefield scarred by artillery and bomb craters, the "Cacti" assaulted with two companies, leaving 81 enemy dead and capturing large amounts of weapons, equipment and documents.

The battle took place in a heavily fortified area approximately eight miles southeast of Duc Pho in lower Quang Ngai Province.

The area was believed to have been one of the primary resupply points for the NVA as the mountains run almost to the coast.

The battle, one of the largest to date for Task Force Oregon, began when Company A, 1st Battalion, 35th Infantry made contact while on a sweep of the area.

NVA Lob Mortars At Ivy Unit

LE THANH — North Vietnamese soldiers recently interrupted the breakfast meal of Company A, 3rd Battalion, 12th Infantry.

The Ivy men were sitting around their bunkers finishing morning chow, sipping a last cup of coffee and preparing to move out for the day.

They were on guard because they were expecting an attack ever since enemy commo wire was found leading into their perimeter the previous night.

At 7:20 a.m. mortar rounds and automatic weapons fire began landing inside the perimeter. Canteen cups and C-rations cans clattered to the ground as the infantrymen dove for cover and began returning a hail of fire.

Sergeant Donald L. Collier (Chillicothe, Ohio), a squad leader with Company A, jumped into his bunker along with three other men and began directing his squad's fire.

The squad leader stopped firing long enough to bandage a wounded comrade as best he could. At one point the man he was aiding pointed frantically to the outside of the bunker.

Turning weapon at his hip, Sergeant Collier put a burst of M-16 fire into a NVA soldier just 10 meters away.

Then, despite the intense enemy fire, Sergeant Collier managed to move the wounded man from his bunker to the command bunker where there was a medic.

Returning to his foxhole, the sergeant rejoined his comrades who were attempting to turn back the attacking NVA.

The contact lasted for approximately five hours before repeated air strikes and artillery concentrations forced the much larger enemy force to withdraw.

Commenting on the battle, Sergeant Collier said, "They threw a lot of stuff at us — rockets, grenades, mortars. But we held on and gave them a lot right back."

The crack NVA unit was tenaciously holding ground between two hills and fighting from prepared bunkers, tunnels, caves and complex trench systems.

Receiving heavy fire from automatic weapons, Company A maneuvered to flank what was later estimated to be a NVA battalion.

Captain Lloyd Yoshina, Company A commander who was wounded by the initial burst of fire, said, "The fire was so heavy I couldn't move even three feet to get to my radio."

Although members of the company attempted to get to him, Captain Yoshina ordered them back so that they wouldn't be hit. Refusing to be evacuated, he was still commanding his company a day later when the battle ended.

Artillery, gunships and air strikes were immediately called in to pound the entrenched enemy. Major James E. Moore Jr., 1st Battalion, 35th Infantry commander who was hovering overhead in his command helicopter, coordinated the supporting fires as well as combat assaults and the units in combat.

By mid-morning Company B had been airlifted into the area of contact. Upon touching down, the company quickly maneuvered to assault the enemy positions.

However, the NVA, dug-in in caves and bunkers, continued to fight throughout the afternoon. During that time other units were moved into the area and

by nightfall the enemy was surrounded by four companies and a cavalry platoon.

Before darkness engulfed the battlefield, the "Cacti" had killed 43 NVA and captured 16 weapons.

When darkness came, flare-ships turned the battlefield back to day. The battle continued throughout the night.

At daylight the "Cacti" were still receiving heavy fire from the entrenched NVA. Once again the area was saturated by air strikes and artillery.

While the supporting fires continued, Major Moore lifted his field commanders out by helicopter and conducted a detailed aerial reconnaissance of the battlefield for the final assault.

By mid-morning the air strikes and artillery were lifted. Through a screen of smoke and in 103 degree heat, two "Cacti" companies, accompanied by Colonel James G. Shanahan, 3rd Brigade commander, assaulted and overran the enemy positions.

Besides killing 81 NVA, the 3rd Brigade troops seized 151 82mm mortar rounds, thousands of rounds of small arms ammunition and large quantities of weapons, grenades and other equipment. They also detained one NVA sergeant.

The "Cacti" were still policing the battlefield when Major General William B. Rosson, Task Force Oregon commander, landed in the middle of the area to commend the infantrymen on a "tremendous victory."



ROAD SWEEP—Private First Class Stewart Isaacson sweeps the road for possible Viet Cong mines. This is part of the 4th Combat Engineers' job while working with the 2nd Battalion (Mechanized), 22nd Infantry of the 3rd Brigade, 4th Division.

JACKS-OF-ALL-TRADES

Engineers Clear Way For 2/22nd APCs

Story & Photos

by

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DAU TIENG—Little is said but much is expected of those jacks-of-all-trades — the combat engineers.

Their importance in smoothing the way is important in the job of maintaining mechanized mobility for the 3rd Brigade, 4th Division.

The 1st Platoon of Company C, 4th Combat Engineers has the mission of assisting the 2nd Battalion (Mechanized), 22nd Infantry in the field.

Whenever there's a bridge to be built, roads to be cleared of mines, bunkers to be built or booby traps to be safely destroyed, the job falls on Second Lieutenant Walter H. Petrie (St. Clair Shores, Mich.) and his engineers.

One of the most important jobs, at least in the eyes of the mechanized troops, is the road clearing operations. With three-man security teams to the front and both flanks, men such as Private First Class Stewart W. Isaacson (Watauga, Wash.) slowly sweep their mine detectors down an uncleared road.

Staff Sergeant Obel D. Nazario-Almodovar (Puerto Rico) comments, "The Viet Cong mines I have run into are pretty ingenious. The one we dug up the other day was a wooden box about 10 inches in diameter and contained a plastic explosive, nails and iron chips. It was hidden near a river bank."

The engineers are also responsible for bridge building. On a recent operation the armored personnel carriers of the "Triple Deuces" crossed over a river on an armored vehicle launching bridge which the engineers had prepared and set into place after clearing the road of mines.

As they walked by his APC, Sergeant John L. Jasinski (Danbury, Conn.) of Company A, 2nd Battalion, 22nd Infantry said, "I never thought much about the engineers until I saw them in action. The men appreciate their abilities and we are darn glad to have them in the field with us."

2/9th Arty Fires Round 300,000

DUC PHO — Major General William B. Rosson, commander of Task Force Oregon, recently fired the 300,000th round for the 2nd Battalion, 9th Artillery of the 3rd Brigade Task Force, 25th Division.

The ceremony, which took place at Battery C's location, came nearly 16 months after General W. C. Westmoreland, commander of U.S. Forces in Vietnam, fired the first round for the "Mighty Ninth" on January 2, 1966. That round was the first fired in combat by any artillery unit of the 25th Division since the Korean War.

General Rosson complimented the artillerymen on the severe blows they have inflicted on the enemy.



DESTROYING TROUBLE—Staff Sergeant Obel D. Nazario-Almodovar of Company C, 4th Combat Engineers prepares a charge to destroy a Viet Cong mine.