

Battle of the Renegade Woods

**ARMY18th Military History Detachment
25th Infantry Division
APO San Francisco 96225
AVDCMH**

SUBJECT: Small Unit Combat After Action Interview Report

THRU:

**Commanding General United States Army Vietnam
ATTN: Command Historian
APO San Francisco 96375**

**TO: Headquarters Department of the Army
ATTN: O.C.M.H. Washington, D.C. 20315**

1. NAME AND TYPE OF OPERATION:

Unnamed; Ground Reconnaissance.

2. DATES OF OPERATION:

02 April - 06 April 1970.

3. LOCATION:

Renegade Woods (XT2930); Sheet Number 6231 III N, Map Series L8020, 1:25,000; Hieu Thien District, Tay Ninh Province.

4. CONTROL HEADQUARTERS:

3rd Brigade, 25th Infantry Division.

5. PERSONS BEING INTERVIEWED:

Not Available

6. INTERVIEWING OFFICER:

Division Historian.

7. TASK ORGANIZATION:

a. Teams 38 and 39, Company F (Ranger), 75th Infantry.

- b. Companies A, B, C, 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry.
- c. Companies A, B, 2nd Battalion (Mechanized), 22nd Infantry.

8. SUPPORTING FORCES:

a. Artillery.

- (1) Battery B, 2nd Battalion, 77th Artillery (105mm howitzer).
- (2) Battery D, 3rd Battalion, 13th Artillery (8" howitzer).
- (3) Battery A, 1st Battalion, 27th Artillery, IIFV (155mm howitzer).
- (4) Battery C, 2nd Battalion, 32nd Artillery, IIFV (8" howitzer).

b. Army Aviation.

- (1) Troop D, 3rd Squadron, 4th Cavalry (Centaur).
- (2) Company A, 25th Aviation Battalion (Little Bear).
- (3) Company B, 25th Aviation Battalion (Diamondhead).
- (4) 116th Assault Helicopter Company, 269th Aviation Battalion (Hornet).
- (5) 187th Assault Helicopter Company, 269th Aviation Battalion (Crusaders).
- (6) 118th Assault Helicopter Company, 145th Aviation Battalion (Thunderbird).
- (7) 159th Medical Detachment (Helicopter Ambulance) (Dustoff) - MEDEVAC.
- (8) 3rd Brigade Aviation Element (Snoopy).

c. United States Air Force. (See Enclose 3)

- (1) Air Force Forward Air Controllers (FAC), 19th Tactical Air Support Squadron (OV-10).
- (2) 3rd Tactical Fighter Wing (F-100; A-37).
- (3) 31st Tactical Fighter Wing (F-100).
- (4) 35th Tactical Fighter Wing (F-100).
- (5) 8th Attack Squadron (A-37).
- (6) 3rd Direct Air Support Center (AC-119 Show).

9. BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The primary mission of the 3rd Brigade, 25th Infantry Division is to destroy VC/NVA forces and their bases of operation; assist the Republic of Vietnam in rural development, pacification and civic action programs; assist in training and provide support to RVNAF; and to be prepared to reinforce US and ARVN forces within the TAOI as directed. This Brigade is continuing Phase IV of Operation Toan Thang.

10. INTELLIGENCE:

a. Enemy: Intelligence indicated that enemy main force units might be moving into the Renegade Woods to establish a base area from which to conduct offensive operations. On 30 March elements of the 271 Regiment and elements of the 272 Regiment conducted an attack on Fire Support Base Jay (XT0375) of the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), but were repulsed with a loss of 70 KIA (BC). After the attack these units were reported moving to base areas to refit. Subsequent moves of these regiments was not indicated, however, a move to the south along the border was suspected and watched for. The first indication of a sizeable enemy force in the Renegade Woods came when Teams 38 and 39, Co F (Ranger), 75th Inf made contact on 2 April 1970. Interrogation of prisoners-of-war and Hoi Chanh, plus readouts from captured documents, later identified the 271 Regiment, 9 VC/NVA Division as the enemy force contacted

during this operation.

Interrogation of Nguyen Huong Mai, a prisoner-of-war captured on 3 April in the vicinity of XT264274 revealed that the 2 and 3 Battalions of the 271 Regiment were moving into newly established positions in the Renegade Woods to prepare for future operations. He further stated that the battalions were 80% NVA and that his battalion (2 Battalion) had a strength of 200-300 men. Documents captured on 3 April in the vicinity of XT292312 identified the Executive Officer, C13 Company, 3 Battalion, 271 Regiment, and the same battalion was identified by further documents found the next day at XT289312.

The ground units involved in the action found numerous indications that the enemy was highly trained and well-equipped. They identified NVA equipment in large quantities, and believed the enemy to be highly aggressive NVA regulars.

For additional information, see Operational Report - Lessons Learned, 372nd Radio Research Company, 303rd Radio Research Battalion, dated 1 April 1970.

b. Terrain: The Renegade Woods is a flat area with thick double canopy jungle heavily undergrown with vines. The few open areas consist of elephant grass bisected by hedgerows and have isolated clumps of brush and a few dead trees, but are basically without cover or concealment. An exception was the landing zone of the Ranger team which had two bomb craters that provided the only cover. The hedgerows and jungle areas had been heavily bunkered and provided excellent defensive positions which were very difficult to locate.

c. Weather: Weather remained variable during the contact period and caused some difficulties during the early morning hours and again in the later afternoon when rainstorms forced air assets to operate at low level. Those periods, notably the mornings of 2, 3, and 4 April and the afternoon of 4 April, were the only exceptions to generally excellent visibility during the contact period. High temperatures in the 90s were typically seasonal for this area of Vietnam and caused only minor difficulties as most of the troops were acclimated. Heavy residual ground moisture on the morning of 2 April caused an unusually high number of weapons to malfunction among the Ranger team. It also served to lessen casualties among the elements engaged that day by absorbing much of the ricochet.

11. MISSION:

Initially, the teams from Company F (Ranger), 75th Infantry were inserted into the contact area to exploit intelligence information. The 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry, which was preparing to begin normal operations in the same general area, was committed as a reaction force when the Rangers developed the large contact. Two companies from the 2nd Battalion (Mechanized), 22nd Infantry, were committed to the action as it expanded. The mission of the reacting forces was to conduct a ground reconnaissance of the area, and to extract the bodies of the two Rangers who had been killed.

12. CONCEPT OF OPERATION AND EXECUTION:

At 0700 hours on 2 April the Commanding Officer, Company F (Ranger), 75th Infantry, CPT Paul Schierholz, was alerted by 3rd Brigade, 25th Infantry Division, to provide an element to exploit intelligence information in the Renegade Woods (XT3032). From 0700 to 0800 hours a Light Scout Team (LST) from Troop D, 3rd Squadron, 4th Cavalry flew a visual reconnaissance of the area and noted no activity in the proposed landing zone (LZ), but saw signs of recent activity in a large clearing approximately 1000 meters to the west and 500 meters to the south.

The AH-1G Cobra (Centaur 47) and OH-6A Light Observation Helicopter (LOH) (Centaur 13) saw a camouflaged structure just west of this clearing and made rocket and grenade passes at it, uncovering eight to ten buildings. They then returned to Cu Chi to refuel.

The 13-man Ranger element, composed of teams 38 and 39, boarded two UH-1H helicopters provided by D/3-4 Cav at 0800 hours and proceeded to the Renegade Woods, escorted by the LST. Upon arriving in the area they still found no signs of enemy activity near the proposed LZ, but discovered additional footprints in the other clearing (XT291316) along with a lister bag lying in the open near a well. At this time WO1 Kenneth Strand, Aircraft Commander in the Cobra, advised 1LT Philip Norton, the Ranger Team Leader who was riding in the lead UH-1H (Centaur 23) to supervise the insertion, of these findings. 1LT Norton decided to insert the team at the new location, which was accomplished at 0835 hours. Following standard operating procedures for Ranger insertions there was no preparation of the landing zone.

The Rangers deployed from the helicopters, immediately found signs of recent activity, and began moving west toward where the structures had been uncovered. At approximately 0840 hours a light machine gun (LMG) opened fire on the lead man, 1LT Norton, SGT Fred Stuckey and SP4 Donald Purdy, at a range of ten to 15 meters. In this initial burst of fire SGT Stuckey was wounded, 1LT Norton's AN/PRC-25 radio was rendered inoperable when the cord to its microphone was severed, and SP4 Purdy's extractor mechanism on his M-16 was shattered. SGT Stuckey and SP4 Purdy destroyed the LMG with hand grenades, killing its crew, but the team began taking fire from all directions. Since a LMG is usually found with at least a reinforced platoon, too large a force for the team to fight, it was decided that they should withdraw to the east and attempt to maneuver around the enemy. SFC Alvin Floyd, the Assistant Team Leader, contacted the Cobra with the remaining radio and requested that suppressive fire be placed on the western treeline, and that a reaction force be sent into the area.

The team split into its two elements, Team 39 under 1LT Norton moving eastward while Team 38 under SFC Floyd provided covering fire. The initial firefight lasted three to five minutes and died down to isolated sniping by the time Team 39 reached the eastern end of the clearing (100 meters away) and began deploying into the woods. During this withdrawal the Cobra made minigun and rocket passes on the western treeline to provide cover. At this time its 40mm automatic grenade launcher jammed after firing only one of the 250 rounds it carried. The LOH also made firing passes with its M-60 machine guns. The two UH-1H helicopters (Centaur 23 and 24) were dispatched to Cu Chi to bring out a reaction force. Centaur 23 had intended to land to MEDEVAC SGT Stuckey, but WO1 Strand refused it permission because no assistance had been requested and ground fire was too intense.

As Team 39 entered the eastern treeline they began to receive a heavy volume of fire from small arms and two or possibly three LMGs. Team 38 had just reached the vicinity of a large bomb crater, approximately 15 feet deep and 30 feet wide, when a combination of small arms and a rocket propelled grenade (RPG) fired from the north killed SFC Floyd and SGT Michael Thomas and wounded SP4 Donald Tinney. SFC Floyd's radio was destroyed by the explosion, leaving the team without radio contact. Suppressive fire was placed by the Rangers in all directions to enable all of them to withdraw to the crater which provided the only cover in the area. At this time SFC Colin Hall silenced the western LMG and killed its crew with hand grenades and M-16 fire, and SGT Charles Avery silenced the RPG-7 and M-79 firing from the northern LMG site.

Once inside the lip of the crater 1LT Norton dragged SP4 Tinney to safety and obtained the microphone from SFC Floyd's radio, enabling him to regain communications. He repeated his request for a reaction force and gunship support, and additionally requested MEDEVAC for the

three men struck by the RPG. The Cobra expended the rest of its rockets and minigun ammunition (4000 rounds) in laying suppressive fire. The LOH made passes with its M-60s expending 600 rounds. It also began jettisoning extra ammunition in preparation for an attempt to accomplish the MEDEVAC by leaving one of its gunners on the ground to make space for the wounded. The UH-1H helicopters heard the call and returned on station, having gotten as far towards Cu Chi as the French Factory (XT3532).

The Rangers inside the crater were taking small arms fire from all directions and hand grenade fire from a finger of the woods to the southwest. However, their suppressive fire succeeded in silencing the crew-served weapons. A NVA soldier emerged from the southern treeline to throw a hand grenade, but was wounded and then killed by two hand grenades thrown by SGT Stuckey. PFC Raymond Allmon expended the 700 rounds of M-60 ammunition he carried and a 50-round belt he removed from SGT Thomas' body, and was reduced to using his .45 caliber pistol. PFC Steven Perez expended all his M-79 ammunition and PFC Kenneth Langland fired 860 rounds before his M-60 malfunctioned. By about 0920 hours the team had expended most of their ammunition and were having many weapons failures. The LST had expended their ammunition and were making dry gun runs in an attempt to suppress the enemy fire.

At 0922 hours Centaur 23's Commander, WO1 James Tonelli, and its Pilot, CPT Philip Tocco, landed after a low-level approach to pick up the wounded. The helicopter received four hits from ground fire during the extraction, and was later examined by experts from Bell Aircraft who expressed amazement that it was still able to fly. The ship landed ten to 15 feet from the lip of the crater, and 1LT Norton gave his men the order to board, since they were in an untenable position. SP5 Charles Lowe, the Grew Chief, maintained fire with his M-60 on the treeline ten meters away while the doorgunner, PFC Richard Adams, a former member of Team 38, jumped off the ship to assist in getting SP4 Tinney aboard. After spending 30 seconds on the ground the overloaded UH-1H lifted off with maximum torque and severe vertical vibration and cleared the treeline with 11 Rangers and its crew of four aboard. One of its M-60 machine guns jammed as it was lifting off, but the Rangers continued firing their individual weapons. The two dead men were left on the ground along with some of the destroyed or damaged weapons and equipment. All the helicopters were running low on fuel and departed for Cu Chi, arriving there about 1000 hours. Centaur 23 had to stop near Trang Bang (XT4919) to administer initial first aid to SP4 Tinney and to redistribute the passengers, some of whom were literally hanging on, before landing at the 12th Evacuation Hospital.

At 0900 hours 1LT David Parsons, a Forward Air Controller (FAC), arrived on station over the contact area in an OV-10 and expended 1500 rounds of minigun ammunition strafing after the extraction. He received small arms and automatic weapons fire from the ground. Also at 0900 hours, Companies B and C, 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry, were alerted that they were to be inserted into the area as the reaction force. Company B had conducted Ambush Patrols (APs) in an area nine kilometers south of the contact area and were alerted to move to a pick-up point for airlift. Company C had been serving as a blocking force for an ARVN contact four kilometers to the southwest. Additionally, Company A which had just come into Cu Chi on standdown was placed on alert. The Battalion had been preparing to conduct operations in the same general area on that day. At 0925 hours LTC George Custer III, Commanding Officer, 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry, flying in a Command and Control helicopter from Company A, 25th Aviation Battalion, took off to supervise the action, and he remained on station for the majority of the five-day encounter.

Company C, utilizing three UH-1H ships, began helilifting to a LZ located in the vicinity of XT298313. Artillery fire from Fire Support Bases (FSBs) Hull and Hampton provided a

blocking fire into which the enemy was to be driven. By 1100 hours the 1st and 3rd Platoons, Company C, had assembled and began moving west towards the area of the Ranger contact, while part of the 2nd Platoon moved along a parallel course 300 meters north. At 1140 hours both elements became engaged. The heavier contact involved the southern group, which had been moving forward in a two-column formation through a series of open areas bordered by hedgerows (XT297313). The lead platoon, the 1st, was immediately pinned down by a LMG firing from the right front. The initial burst of fire killed the point man of the right column and wounded the other point man. The Platoon Leader, 1LT Ronnie Clark, was also wounded in the stomach by this burst which initiated a 20-minute firefight. At 1217 hours urgent MEDEVAC was requested by the Company Commander.

When this action began, 2/C/2-27 Inf began receiving small arms fire from the west (to their front), but most fell short. The Platoon Leader, 2LT Monte Hack, requested gunship cover to enable him to pull back and link up with the rest of the Company. He withdrew but was unable to rejoin the rest of the Company until about 1400 hours when Company B was lifted into the action. At that time his wounded man and five heat casualties were evacuated. The 3rd Platoon which had been on the right flank of the 1st pulled back and maneuvered in again on its left. 2LT Ronald Kolb, with 3/C/2-27 Inf was killed during this maneuver, and SSG Melvin Kalili, Platoon Sergeant of the 1st Platoon, was killed when he went to aid the wounded point man. The intense enemy fire was very accurate and well-directed. The men of Company C were effectively pinned down and had difficulty locating the source of the enemy fire. They remained pinned down by the sniper fire following the firefight for over six hours and had extreme difficulty extracting their casualties. The dead point was left overnight because it was impossible to reach his body.

At 1145 hours a Light Fire Team (LFT) composed of two UH-1C gunships from the 118th Assault Helicopter Company were orbiting the contact area trying to locate ground fire with other aviation elements and CPT William Wilson, a FAC. One of the gunships was shot down by small arms fire, but the pilot was able to set it down in a clearing about 800 meters west of the contact site (XT287314), and the crew safely evaded one hedgerow westward where the other gunship rescued them. The UH-1C's left side rocket pod was on fire and the rockets "cooked off" after the crew had left. The FAC and other gunships expended in support of the rescue.

At 1200 hours CPT Wendell Brown (FAC) was on station over the contact area and inquired if the ground commander wanted tactical air strikes in addition to the LFT from Company B, 25th Aviation Battalion, then on station. He requested two immediate air strikes in addition to the one already scheduled. Those he directed on target at 1315, 1330, and 1345 hours in an area west of the contact. At 1337, 1357 and 1421 hours resupply ships from Company A, 25th Aviation Battalion, brought in extra ammunition and evacuated seven wounded men and five heat casualties to Tay Ninh.

Company B, 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry, which had been waiting at its pick-up zone since 0900 hours was finally airlifted into a LZ (XT298315) to assist Company C. The seven UH-1H helicopters took the Commanding Officer, CPT Charles Creswell, and his command element with the 1st and part of the 2nd Platoons on the first lift. After an hour-long flight, it inserted at 1423 hours. The second lift brought in the remainder of the company and 1SG Domingo Rodriguez-Colon at 1820 hours. The element from the initial lift formed on line with 2/B/2-27 Inf on the right and moved forward 300 meters until they reached Company C.

At approximately 1445 hours they began to receive small arms and automatic weapons fire, and assaulted forward, bypassing the strongpoint which was keeping Company C pinned down. The

1st Platoon worked through the open area to its front by fire and maneuver, but was forced to halt when the 2nd Platoon became pinned down temporarily, causing its fire to impact close to the front of the 1st Platoon's positions. While they were temporarily halted, the enemy attempted to maneuver around their right flank. Two men who emerged from the hedgerow were killed by the fire of 1/B/2-27 Inf, one of whom appeared to be either a junior officer or NCO who was attempting to lead his men. Other enemy soldiers were chased out of the hedgerow and two more were killed by gunship fire then they attempted to flee west. This firefight cost the 1st Platoon one machine gunner wounded.

The 2nd Platoon was finally able to move up on line, but highly accurate sniper fire immediately pinned them down, killing SP4 John Lyons, the RTO (radioman), and 2LT Orvil Kitchens the Forward Observer (FO) from Battery B, 2nd Battalion, 77th Artillery, in rapid succession. The bypassed "hot corner", where the initial LMG fire had come from, had been quiet for some time, so SGT Stephen Adams, a squad leader from the 1st Platoon, Company B, and SP4 Richard Nast, a medic from HHC attached to his platoon, attempted to retrieve the body of the dead point man. The LMG opened fire on them and kept them pinned down until SP4 Orlando Noriega, a machine gunner from 1/B/2-27 Inf fired to his rear with his M-60 and an M-16 which he took from his assistant gunner and silenced it. This action also enabled the forward elements to commence a fighting withdrawal as they began to run out of ammunition. They were forced to leave two bodies at the limit of the farthest advance, as well as the dead point man, and abandon some equipment. MEDEVAC of casualties took place at 1533, 1545 and 1631 hours as the wounded and the bodies of the KIAs were brought back to the LZ.

At 1525 hours Company A, 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry, was alerted to move to a pick-up zone at Cu Chi and began lifting on two UH-1H helicopters at 1600 hours. By 1815 hours the last of the company had inserted into a LZ approximately one kilometer southwest of Companies B and C. The withdrawal of these two Companies to a night defensive position (NDP) in the vicinity of their LZ was covered by artillery fire from FSB Hull and FSB Hampton, and air strikes placed on enemy positions 400-600 meters west by 1LT Hamby Fagg at 1700 hours and again at 1805 hours. This second strike which was made by four F-100s struck positions marked by a Cobra in the area of the camouflaged structures. During this last strike 1LT Fagg expended 1000 rounds covering Company B's right flank with a Cobra. They spotted a group of enemy maneuvering to attack, and broke it up after the ground troops had marked their positions with smoke.

At 1820 hours the second lift of Company B arrived at the LZ and was directed by MAJ Howard McAllister, the 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry, S-3 who had assumed command on the ground, to begin securing a NDP for the engaged troops to withdraw to. LTC Custer reported that the contact was broken off at 1840 hours, and a four-ship resupply mission brought ammunition, food and water into the NDP. Reinforcements were brought in for Company C from the Battalion rear, and 1LT Cy Weisner, Company C Executive Officer (XO), replaced the wounded 1LT Clark in command of 1/C/2-27 Inf. Helicopter gunships and flareships remained on station during the night but there was no contact. CPT John MacLeod directed the final airstrike of the day at 1900 hours and made rocket and machine gun runs when the fighters received ground fire.

The mission of the 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry, was to conduct a ground reconnaissance on 3 April of the previous day's contact area, and to retrieve the five bodies left overnight. The task force was composed of Companies A, B, C, and Company B, 2nd Battalion (Mechanized), 22nd Infantry, which was made OPCON. Plans called for B/C/2-27 Inf to sweep west from their position through the area of their firefight to the area of the Ranger contact. There they would

link up with Company A and B/2-22 Inf (M) moving up from the south.

At 0745 hours a LST from D/3-4 Cav engaged three enemy in the vicinity of XT292320. They received ineffective small arms fire from the enemy and killed all three. CPT Bobby Hawkins, FAC, arrived on station at 0945 hours as the ground troops began moving forward, and shut off artillery fire to clear the air for friendly aircraft. At 1000 hours he sent the day's first air strike into the area, resulting in two enemy KIA (BC). His rocket and machine gun passes which were required to suppress ground fire directed at the aircraft resulted in another possible enemy KIA. Companies B and C had meanwhile moved up to the contact area and paused while the air strikes were bright in, and then moved forward to evacuate the three bodies left in the area the previous afternoon. They paused again at 1100 hours to let additional air assets be brought in.

CPT MacLeod brought in an air strike at 1100 hours on positions marked with smoke by a LST from Troop D, 3rd Squadron, 4th Cavalry, and in response to ground requests for additional napalm had two more air strikes brought into the area by 1300 hours. At 1100 hours a LST from D/3-4 Cav engaged two enemy near an oxcart in the vicinity of XT275308, killing both. The NVA were attempting to fire an RPG at the LOH when they were killed by rockets and minigun fire from the Cobra. A .51 caliber machine gun mount, six RPG rounds and 1/4 pound of documents were evacuated to Cu Chi from this encounter. CPT MacLeod engaged two enemy in a bunker (XT283318) at 1146 hours, killing both of them. The weather had cleared by this time, enabling the follow-up missions to avoid the necessity of making low-level approaches which had plagued pilots earlier in the day. The first element of fighters at 1300 hours produced multiple secondary explosions.

During their pause to allow the air assets to be brought in, Companies B and C policed the contact area and gathered up abandoned equipment for evacuation. They also ate a hot meal at noon which was brought forward from the LZ by their respective security elements. Company C utilized its 1st Platoon for this task, with the 2nd and 3rd Platoons remaining on line. Company B kept three platoons as a striking force and had its Weapons Platoon (without heavy weapons) acting as a rear security element. The equipment was evacuated between 1400 and 1430 hours, with the two companies (minus security elements) sweeping forward to the area of the Ranger contact where they linked up with A/2-27 Inf and B/2-22 Inf (M) which had swept up from the south across their front. Two armored personnel carriers (APCs) broke down during the sweep and 2/B/2-27 Inf provided security for them until they were repaired.

At approximately 1400 hours CPT Brown and 1LT Parsons received permission to engage a bunker complex (XT290314) which 1LT Parsons had seen one NVA run into earlier. After having B/2-27 Inf mark its positions with smoke, CPT Brown made an initial rocket pass which flushed four or five enemy into the open. The two FACs made ten passes apiece on the target, chasing several more enemy into the open, and receiving fire from small arms, LMGs, and RPGs. Initially, the enemy ran towards Company B, which engaged them with organic weapons at 1415 hours. Six enemy were killed by the ground troops before they fled. Several weapons were found in the bunkers, indicating that the enemy was attempting to strike Company B on the northern flank.

After the bodies of the two dead Rangers were recovered by Company A, the ground troops swept west to the downed UH-1C. They provided security while it was disarmed and recovered by a CH-47. Recovery took place at 1815 hours with 1LT Parsons flying cover. At this time all four companies returned to the clearing where the Ranger contact had occurred and established a NDP with APCs positioned around the perimeter.

During the afternoon's sweep of the area, there were several isolated contacts. Company A

engaged three enemy in a bunker (XT292312) located a LST from D/3-4 Cav. Using small arms fire at 1517 hours, they killed three enemy without taking any casualties. A ChiCom claymore mine and documents identifying the XO, C13 Company, 3 Battalion, 271 Regiment, were evacuated and three RPG rounds destroyed. At 1528 hours Company B, 2nd Battalion (Mechanized), 22nd Infantry, engaged four enemy (XT294313) with organic weapons, killing all four. The enemy small arms fire produced negative casualties, and a cache containing 49 RPG rounds, 70 82mm mortar rounds, and 100 60mm mortar rounds was uncovered and evacuated. At 1529 hours a LST from D/3-4 Cav located eight enemy killed by artillery at XT289316. The force sweeping from the south engaged another group of four enemy at 1535 hours at XT293314. Company A killed three of the enemy and captured one CKC rifle without receiving any return fire. Company B, 2nd Battalion (Mechanized), 22nd Infantry, captured the fourth, who was taken to Tay Ninh for interrogation.

Two pounds of documents, two RPG launchers, five AK-47 rifles, two SKS rifles, three ChiCom claymores, 19 ChiCom hand grenades, one ChiCom field radio with S.O.I., 1500 rounds of small arms ammunition, 400 rounds of .51 caliber ammunition, one loaded RPD magazine, 23 rounds of 75mm recoilless rifle ammunition, four pounds of medical supplies, a bag of miscellaneous machine gun rounds of polished rice, two NVA backpacks, four NVA canteens, five NVA ponchos, three NVA shovels, two flashlights, and six pounds of clothing and miscellaneous web gear were gathered during the sweep of the battlefield and evacuated to Cu Chi. One enemy body was also discovered at XT291315.

After spending an uneventful night, all companies moved out from the NDP to continue their ground reconnaissance of the immediate area on the morning of 4 April. Company C prepared to move to Cu Chi Base Camp to conduct a 24-hour maintenance standdown, and Company A, 2nd Battalion (Mechanized), 22nd Infantry moved from Patrol Base (PB), Blue (XT258290) to replace them. At 0830 hours A/2-27 Inf located one enemy KIA in blue shorts and a blue shirt which was credited to their contact at 1517 hours the previous day. At the same time B/2-27 Inf located another body at XT289314 which was credited to artillery fired at 1548 hours on 3 April. At 0915 hours one field telephone switchboard with batteries, two terminal boxes, one 82mm mortar sight, five pounds of documents, and one unknown type of booster which had been found during the morning by the two companies were evacuated to Cu Chi. Another cache (XT287317) containing 43 rounds of 82mm, 30 rounds of 60mm and three rounds of 75mm ammunition plus an 82mm mortar sight and one ton of unbagged rice was discovered by the two companies at 1136 hours and destroyed. At noon the companies returned to their NDP for a hot meal brought in by helicopter.

The two air strikes of the day were flown at 1100 hours and 1300 hours before weather conditions became too poor. CPT Brown directed the first on targets marked by helicopters from D/3-4 Cav. CPT MacLeod directed the second, which produced one large secondary explosion and several smaller ones. He had the F^a100s make strafing runs with their 20mm cannon, but they were unable to cause any more explosions. An artillery spotter in a LOH made a visual reconnaissance of the area and saw numerous boxes scattered on the ground, leading to the assumption that a supply bunker had been destroyed.

In the afternoon sweep Companies A and B, 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry, moved northwest to establish a line, and then began sweeping southwest towards two large clearings. Companies A and B, 2nd Battalion (Mechanized), 22nd Infantry provided security for them and then continued towards PB Blue for the night. During the sweep B/2-27 Inf located several bodies and miscellaneous equipment. At 1220 hours they located ten KIA (BC) at XT287317, of which six were credited to their small arms fire, two to the artillery, and two to air strikes. At 1230

hours two bodies were located (XT279313) which had been killed by D/3-4 Cav, and one RPG-2 launcher was evacuated. Fifteen minutes later at XT289315 one pound of documents, 660 small arms rounds, nine 82mm mortar rounds, and one RPG round were evacuated to Cu Chi. A/B/2-27 Inf halted at 1600 hours in the large clearings to eat their evening meal which was brought in on resupply helicopters. At this time the evening rainstorms set in.

During this meal, A/B/2-27 Inf used binoculars to select sites for platoon-sized ambush patrols which would be set out that night in the clearings. At 1930 hours the patrols moved out. Company B selected locations for its platoons along the northwest edge of their clearing. The 1st Platoon set up an L-shaped ambush at the clearing entrance (XT275301), the 2nd Platoon chose an area to their northeast (XT278314), and the 3rd Platoon with the command element remained between them (XT277312). By 2000 hours, the 1st and 2nd Platoons had become established in their locations, but the 3rd still had not found a suitable site.

Just after dark (approximately 2010 hours), 1/B/2-27 Inf saw an unidentified element moving towards their positions from the southwest. The Platoon Leader, 2LT Dennis Heitner, wanted clearance before engaging the estimated 20 men because there were indications that they might be allied troops. Before he could contact the Company Commander, his men informed him that the force was composed of 200-250 heavily equipped NVA. 2LT Heitner ordered his men to lay down and let the enemy pass. The column, which had no forward or flank security and was observing lax route discipline, passed in such close proximity to the platoon's position that they walked over the wires strung out to the platoon's claymore mines. The enemy force paused for approximately 45 seconds near the platoon's position to allow stragglers to close up, and the AP saw that they were heavily laden with LMGs, mortars, and large quantities of ammunition being transported on stretchers. As the two-man rear security element of the 300 meter long column came abreast of his position (about 2035 hours), 2LT Heitner told his men to get on the other side of their berm and open fire on the enemy who were disappearing into a large wooded area to the east. He initiated fire with his M-60 machine guns and M-79s, followed by a general engagement with small arms. The enemy replied with small arms and RPG fire.

The other two platoons, concentrated at the 3rd Platoon location, set up a cross fire. Company A, 2nd Battalion (Mechanized), 22nd Infantry, was recalled to the scene and helicopter gunships, flareships and artillery were brought in. A/2-27 Inf never saw the enemy, most of whom had evaded into the woods when the contact was initiated. B/2-27 Inf gathered at the 3rd Platoon site and were joined there by A/2-22 Inf (M). The mechanized company had taken sniper fire which wounded two men in its effort to join B/2-27 Inf, but had seen few enemy. Resupply was brought in to the consolidated NDP, but no further activity occurred that night. It was the opinion of the officers of Company B that the element they engaged was returning to its base camp and was completely unaware of the presence of any allied units in the area. It is possible that this unit was part of the force which attacked FSB Jay (XT0375) on 30 March.

On 5 April, Companies A and B, 2nd Battalion (Mechanized), 22nd Infantry, and Companies B and C, 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry, were ordered to continue their ground reconnaissance of the contact area, concentrating on the vicinity of the previous night's encounter. Company A, 2-27 Inf, would go to Cu Chi Base Camp for a 24-hour maintenance standdown and be relieved in place at noon by Company C.

At 0925 hours a LST from D/3-4 Cav located two enemy KIA (XT292299) which were credited to A/2-22 Inf (M) from the previous evening's action. At 0940 hours B/2-27 Inf located one enemy KIA from the night before and received one Hoi Chanh, badly burned by napalm (XT275307). They also captured two AK-47 rifles and one pistol belt. Four bodies of enemy soldiers killed by air strikes were located between 1100 and 1200 hours. Company B discovered

two at XT281306, and Company A found one at XT280304 and another at XT282306.

Two air strikes were delivered at split locations during the morning. CPT Hawkins directed one at 1160 hours which destroyed a large supply bunker and produced a large secondary explosion. 1LT Parsons directed the second at 1200 hours.

After the noon meal, the ground forces continued to sweep west towards their evening NDP (XT270320). At 1500 hours LTC Custer's Command and Control ship engaged and killed one enemy with three flame baths at XT296301. There was no return fire. One half-hour later A/2-22 Inf (M) located five enemy KIA from their engagement on 4 April (XT276303). They also captured ten rucksacks and destroyed 35 RPG boosters. At 1545 hours, a UH-1H from the 25th Aviation Battalion flying over XT289301 at an altitude of 500 feet and a speed of 50 knots received small arms fire from an unknown location. No damage occurred and there was no return fire. The final action of the day occurred when Battery C, 2nd Battalion, 77th Artillery engaged a suspected enemy location (XT296308), killing two at 1745 hours.

Plans for the final day of the action, 6 April, called for Company A, 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry, to return to Cu Chi for a 24-hour maintenance standdown. The remaining companies (C/2-27 Inf and A/B/2-22 Inf (M)) were to make a sweep through the area and move west to NDPs.

At 0730 hours A/B/2-22 Inf (M) received one Hoi Chanh in their NDP (XT295283). He was evacuated to Cu Chi for interrogation. Exploiting information obtained from him, Company B evacuated one RPD light machine gun at 1500 hours (XT301286). The other incident during the day occurred at 1341 hours when Company B detonated a tripwired hand grenade and had two men wounded (XT282302). Three air strikes were flown at 0900, 0930 and 1300 hours, the last of which produced a large secondary explosion.

13. RESULTS:

This action was a successful ground reconnaissance operation carried out by 3rd Brigade elements. Enemy personnel losses during the five-day operation were 101 KIA (BC), one prisoner-of-war captured, and two Hoi Chanh received by US forces. Large amounts of enemy equipment were also captured or destroyed. US forces suffered 11 men killed and 35 wounded, of whom 18 were treated and returned to duty immediately, but one of whom subsequently died of wounds.

The 271 VC/NVA Regiment was hurt by this operation which inflicted heavy personnel and material losses and destroyed the base area of the 2 and 3 Battalions. This operation has impaired the enemy's offensive capability in the Hieu Thien District of Tay Ninh Province.

14. ANALYSIS:

This operation succeeded because the morale, initiative, esprit-decorps and fighting qualities of the individual soldier proved equal to the test, and because of outstanding support from air assets and artillery. The enemy force was aggressive, well-equipped, highly trained, and well-entrenched. The massive, concentrated firepower which was utilized by the ground troops enabled them to batter the enemy while minimizing casualties.

The initial contacts of both the Rangers and Companies B and C, 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry, resulted in heavy expenditures of ammunition, particularly M-60 and M-79 rounds. The enemy apparently was inadequately supplied with mortars and M-79s, since he made little use of them,

especially in the Ranger contact when they would have been decisive. Both the Ranger team and B/C/2-27 Inf experienced sniper fire which was highly effective, and had enemy ground elements trying to maneuver around their flanks. Air assets proved invaluable in providing flank security. The team from Company F (Ranger), 75th Infantry, felt that their early insertion caught the enemy by surprise, since the extensive positions around the clearing were only partly manned. By contrast B/C/2-27 Inf found the positions they assaulted prepared and fully manned.

The Forward Air Controllers encountered unusual problems with air congestion during the operation. There were numerous helicopters overflying the contact area, and an ARVN contact four kilometers southwest which was also utilizing air support required coordination. Eighteen tactical air strikes were flown in the area, despite heavy cloud cover which often provided the supporting fighters with special problems involved in low altitude bombing.

[Signature Block]

s/ Ralph J. Ballway

RALPH J. BALLWAY

MAJ, INF

Division Historian