

THIRD SQUADRON, FIFTH CAVALRY, IN VIETNAM

PART I

[CONUS AND III CORPS]

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November 1992

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FOREWORD

The Third Squadron, Fifth Cavalry, In Vietnam, Part One, is part one of a two part history of the Fifth Cavalry in Vietnam. Part one is the history of the Fifth Cavalry from its activation at Fort Riley, Kansas, through its deployment to Vietnam, and its initial combat operations in South Vietnam's III Corps Tactical Zone. Though the squadron spent fifty-six months in Vietnam it only served twelve months in III Corps. Significant is the fact that during its time in Vietnam it served little with its parent 9th Infantry Division and was instead continually under the operational control of other divisions and regiments in I and III Corps.

Consequently the Fifth Cavalry's Vietnam history is interwoven within the operational records of Army and Marine Corps commands that were deployed over the length and breadth of South Vietnam and served in Laos and Cambodia as well as its parent 9th Infantry Division's records. For sixteen years I have conducted ongoing research into the squadron's Vietnam exploits. This in turn has allowed me to reach the point that I am now able to prepare a history of the Fifth Cavalry during its fifty-six months in Vietnam.

The history is based primarily on operational records prepared by the various commands under which the squadron served. As a researcher I must state that while I was successful in locating significant quantities of records much remained undiscovered. Many divisional operational report-lessons learned had been reduced to mere skeletons by the withdrawal of significant amounts of the report by the Department of the Army. And many combat after action reports were not located. But I am confident that the majority of these documents have survived the years since the end of the Vietnam War and will surface in a military repository in the future.

But there was sufficient information for me to prepare a history of the Fifth Cavalry in Vietnam from. Though because of an imbalance in the documents I received, it is possible to present a significant amount of information on some operations the Fifth Cavalry conducted, while others will only have the barest of information. None-the-less I am confident this is the time to prepare the history so that the information is available to all those who are interested in the Fifth Cavalry's Vietnam history.

## FIFTH CAVALRY LEGACY

When the 3d Squadron, 5th Cavalry was activated at Fort Riley, Kansas, on 1 February 1966 it possessed a rich military heritage extending over eleven decades of service to the United States. The 3d Squadron is an element of the 5th Cavalry Regiment, a parent regiment in the Army's Combat Arms Regimental System. The 5th Cavalry is the August 1861 redesignation of the 2d Cavalry that occurred during the Civil War when the Army redesignated its mounted forces according to their respective dates of organization<sup>1</sup>. Lineagely the 3d Squadron is the decendent of Company C, 2d Cavalry.

The 2d Cavalry was constituted in the United States Army on 3 March 1855 and organized on 28 May 1855 in Louisville, Kentucky. The lettered companies were recruited from across the nation: Mobile, Alabama; Winchester, Virginia; Western Pennsylvania; Baltimore, Maryland; St Louis, Missouri; Louisville, Kentucky; Evansville, Indiana; Logansport, Indiana; and Cincinnati, Ohio. Company C was organized in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania.

From inception the 2d Cavalry was known as "Jeff Davis' Own" and "Jeff Davis' Pet" in difference to then Secretary of War and future Confederate president Jefferson Davis. The officers assigned to the 2d Cavalry were of the highest quality. Among the officers assigned to the regiment in 1855 were future Confederate generals: Colonel Albert Sidney Johnston\* 1803-1862; Lieutenant Colonel Robert E. Lee\* 1807-1870; Major William J. Hardee\* 1815-1873; Captains Edward Van Dorn 1820-1863, Edmund Kirby Smith 1824-1893; Lieutnants John B. Hood 1831-1878, Fitzhugh Lee<sup>2</sup> 1835-1905 [Robert E. Lee's nephew]. In addition future Union generals Major George H. Thomas<sup>3</sup> 1816-1870 and Captain George Stoneman 1822-1894 were assigned to the regiment also. [\* were no longer assigned to the 2d Cavalry at the start of the Civil War.] It's horses purchased in Kentucky were finest obtainable and costing more that what the Army was then permitted to pay for it's horses. So it was the best mounted regiment the country had ever seen, with each troop riding horses matched in color.

After assembling at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri, the 2d Cavalry set out across country for Fort Belknap, Texas, where it would relieve the Regiment of Mounted Riflemen [redesignated 3d Cavalry in August 1861]. In late December 1855 the 2d Cavalry reaching Texas occupied Fort Belknap and was also stationed at Fort Mason and Fort Cooper. For the next four years the regiment was engaged in fighting with Kiowa and Commanche Indians. Then in early 1861 as the United States moved closer to civil war the southern officers resigned their commiss-

ions and went south. At the start of the Civil War Colonel Johnston was no longer serving with the 2d Cavalry. Instead he was commanding the Department of the Pacific in San Francisco, California, where he had been on duty since 1860. In March 1861 Robert E. Lee had been promoted to colonel of the 1st Cavalry. Consequently neither officer was serving with the regiment at the start of the Civil War. Shortly after Texas succeeded from the Union the remaining officers of the 2d Cavalry concentrated the regiment at Green Lake, Texas, then boarded steamships at Indianola, Texas, for New York. Upon their return the officers went to Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, to recruit the regiment anew in the north. During its frontier service the regiment was given campaign credit for the following campaigns: Texas 1856, Oklahoma 1858, Oklahoma 1859.

On guard duty in Washington, D.C., three companies were with Union forces when they crossed the Potomac River on 24 May 1861 and occupied a buffer zone for the nation's capital. Four companies accompanied Brigadier General Irwin McDowell when his ill fated army departed on its attempt to capture Richmond, Virginia, on 11 July 1861 that ended in disaster at Bull Run, the first battle of the Civil War<sup>4</sup>. On 3 August 1861 the 2d Cavalry was redesignated 5th Cavalry during the Army's reorganization of its mounted forces.

In August 1861 the 5th Cavalry became part of the newly created Army of the Potomac, and for the next four years its fate was tied to this army's often badly lead fate. In the Army of the Potomac the regiment served under Generals George B. Mc Clellan, Ambrose E. Burnside, Joseph Hooker, and George G. Meade. The 5th Cavalry was continuously active in fighting in Virginia, in actions including the siege of Yorktown, Cold Harbor, Gaines Mill, and Malvern Hill. The regiment was active in the Maryland Campaign, participating in the pursuit to the Potomac, and crossed into Virginia for the ensuing twelve days of fighting. In 1863 the 5th's role was highlighted by Stoneman's raid toward Richmond. In 1864 the regiment accompanied General Sheridan in his brilliant campaign in the Shenandoah Valley. The regiment continued its fighting right up to 9 April 1865 when it had the honor to witness the surrender of General Robert E. Lee and his Army of Northern Virginia at Appomattox Courthouse. The regiment's Civil War campaign credits: Bull Run, Penninsula, Antietam, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, Wilderness, Spotsylvania, Cold Harbor, Petersburg, Shenandoah, Appomattox, Virginia 1861, Virginia 1862, Virginia 1863, Virginia 1864, and Maryland 1863. During the Civil War the first member of the 5th Cavalry won a Congressional Medal of Honor.

Following the Civil War elements of regiment were stationed in Tennessee, Kentucky, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Virginia, and the Carolinas on Reconstruction duty. In September 1868 seven companies of the 5th Cavalry under the command of Major William B. Royall arriving from the south by train detrained between Fort Hayes and Fort Wallace, Kansas, and were immediately ordered north to begin offensive operations against Indians on Beaver Creek. Subsequently Major Eugene A. Carr arrived and assumed command of the regiment. Though aging Mexican War veteran Colonel William H. Emory was colonel of the 5th Cavalry, Carr exercised field command of the regiment for the next eight years. For eight months the 5th Cavalry would campaign from Fort Lyons, Colorado. The regiment was in the field during the Winter Campaign of 1869. In June of that year the regiment was ordered north to Fort McPherson, Nebraska, to participate in the Republican River Campaign. The regiment was aided in the campaign by famed scout William F. "Bufflo Bill" Cody who would have a long relationship with the 5th Cavalry. During this campaign the regiment had a major fight with Cheyenne and some Sioux and Araphoe Indians at Tall Bulls village at Summit Springs, Colorado, on 11 July 1869.

The 5th Cavalry remained at Fort McPherson until November 1871 when the regiment was transferred to Arizona where it was actively engaged in fighting with Apache Indians for the next four years. In May 1875 the regiment transferred back to Kansas. And following its return to the plains it was engaged in fighting in both Kansas and Oklahoma [Indian Territory]. In June 1876 the regiment was again moved north for duty in Wyoming and Nebraska. During the next six months the 5th Cavalry took part in the Big Horn and Yellowstone Expeditions, and was engaged in fighting at War Bonnet Creek, Nebraska on 17 July 1876; Slim Buttes, South Dakota on 9 September 1876; and Dull Knife's village, Big Horn Mountains, Wyoming on 25 November 1876. During this period newly promoted Colonel Wesley Merritt joined the 5th Cavalry in the field on 1 July 1876 and assumed command of the regiment.

While stationed in Wyoming and Nebraska in 1877 the 5th Cavalry attempted to seal off the outlet of the Stinking Water River [Shoeshone] during the Nez Perce War. But the Nez Perce Indians had passed through the area before the 5th arrived. In January 1878 the regiment had three companies deployed at the Ross Fort Agency on the Upper Snake River during trouble there with Bannock Indians. Next in 1879 elements of the regiment became engaged with Ute Indians in fighting on the White River Agency in northwestern Colorado. And part of the relief force sent to their relief was also from the 5th Cavalry as was its

leader Colonel Merritt.

In 1885 the 5th Cavalry was again moved southward where it was stationed in both Kansas and Oklahoma. Five years later the 5th Cavalry was deployed northward when trouble occurred on the Pine Ridge and Rosebud Indian Reservations in South Dakota in December 1890. When the troopers finally returned to their home stations it was to a different era in American history that they returned to. Because Pine Ridge and the fighting at Wounded Knee and White Clay Creek in which the 5th Cavalry did not participate marked the end of the Indian Wars. And the year 1890 also marked the end of the American frontier as well. During its twenty-two years of frontier service thirty members of the 5th Cavalry were awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. And for its part on the frontier the 5th Cavalry gained the following campaign credits: Commances, Apaches, Little Big Horn, Nez Perces, Bannocks, Cheyennes, Utes, Arizona 1872 and Arizona 1874.

The 5th Cavalry was transferred to Texas in 1893 and was stationed there when the Spanish-American War broke out in 1898. The regiment moved to Tampa, Florida, but did not go overseas. Instead A Troop was sent to Puerto Rico and participated in skirmishes at Hermiguaras and Las Marias in August 1898. Following the war the 5th Cavalry went to Puerto Rico in 1898 and remained there until 1900. After a brief stop in the United States the regiment was sent to the Philippines where an insurrection against United States rule was underway. In 1903 after its return to the United States the regiment was stationed in the southwest for six years. Next the 5th Cavalry was sent to Schofield Barracks, Hawaii for duty. After its return to the United States in 1913 the regiment was briefly stationed at Fort Huachuca, Arizona. And in 1914 and 1915 the regiment sent troops to the scene of coal strikes in Colorado and Arkansas.

Following Pancho Villas' bloody attack on Columbus, New Mexico, on 1 March 1916 the 5th Cavalry arriving at Columbus on 25 March and joined the Punitive Expedition on 30 March 1916. The 5th Cavalry remained in Mexico until 5 February 1917 when it crossed back into the United States. Upon its return the regiment marched to Fort Bliss, Texas. On 20 March 1917 an effort was made by the Army to organize its regular infantry and cavalry regiments along the Mexican border into the 1st, 2d and 3d Provisional Infantry Divisions and the 1st Prvosional Cavalry Division. The division's were assigned to the 1st Provisional Corps. The 5th Cavalry was assigned to the 1st Provisional Cavalry Division. On 6 april 1917 the United States entered World War 1 and when the majority of the divison's elements were ordered out of the Southern Department the divisions were discontinued and the 5th Cavalry was then assigned to a



Provisional Cavalry Brigade.

In an effort to provide the American Expeditionary Force in France with cavalry the Army next organized the 15th Cavalry Division with headquarters at Fort Bliss, Texas, in December 1917. The cavalry for the division were the regular regiments patrolling the Mexican border. So the 5th Cavalry at Fort Bliss was assigned to the division's 2d Cavalry Brigade also headquartered at Bliss. In March 1918 the division's 6th and 15th Cavalry Regiments were shipped overseas but the division itself was short lived and on 12 May 1918 it was discontinued.

Following World War 1 the 5th Cavalry left Fort Bliss in 1919 and moved to the Big Bend district of Texas and patrolled the Mexican border. District headquarters was at Marfa, Texas. Then in 1921 the regiment moved farther south to Fort Clark, Texas. The next year the regiment was assigned to the newly established 1st Cavalry Division. And in 1923 it became part of the division's 1st Cavalry Brigade. Finally in February 1941 the 1st Cavalry Brigade and 5th Cavalry transferred to Fort Bliss where they joined the remainder of the 1st Cavalry Division who were station there.

The 5th Cavalry was dismounted at Fort Bliss on 28 February 1943 and organized as infantry. Leaving Bliss the regiment preceeded to Camp Stoneman, California on 20 June, where it remained until it departed the San Francisco Port of Embarkation on 2 July for the Southwest Pacific. The regiment arrived in Australia on 24 July 1943. While in Australia the 1st Cavalry Division underwent jungle and amphibious training. On 4 December 1943 the 5th Cavalry was reorganized partly under cavalry and partly under infantry tables of organization and equipment. The division next landed at Oro Bay New Guinea where it trained for operations in the Admiralty Islands.

On 29 February 1944 a 5th Cavalry squadron landed on Los Negros Island and after heavy fighting captured the Monote Airfield. The regiment was then reinforced by division. Other divisional forces assaulted Manus Island. By 18 March the division was mopping up both Los Negros and Manus and had seized other nearby island. The Admiralties were secured by 18 May 1944. The entire 1st Cavalry Division then trained until it's departure for the Philippines on 12 October 1944.

In the Philippines the 5th Cavalry and the 7th and 12th Cavalry Regiments assaulted Leyte Island on 20 October capturing San Jose, Tacloban Airfield, and Cataisan Peninsula. Regrouping the division converged on Carigara. The 1st Cavalry Division then cleared the Mt Badian-Hill 2348 region. On 23 December

the division attacked west toward the coast over swamps and scattered resistance, and the 5th and the 12th Cavalry Regiment reached the coast at Tibur on 28 December. The division fought past Villaba to contact the 32nd Infantry Division. Following 8 January 1945 the division prepared for movement to Luzon.

The 1st Cavalry Division landed in the Mabilao area of the Lingayen Gulf on 27 January 1945 and attacked with the 5th and 8th Cavalry toward Manila which the division entered on 3 February. The division faced fierce opposition in the northern and eastern suburbs. In Manila the 5th Cavalry captured the Agriculture Building on 1 March. The division then began its drive against the Shimbu Line with its four regiments abreast on 8 March and stormed Bench Mark Hill 11, and seized the crest of Bench Mark Hill 9 on 10 March. The division was relieved in the Antipolo area on 12 March and withdrew for rehabilitation.

The division then began its drive on Lipa by taking Santo Tomas on 24 March and Los Banos the following day. The division then turned east and the 5th Cavalry reached San Pablo on 2 April. After heavy fighting the 1st Cavalry Division took Mauban on the east coast 10 April and established contact with the 11th Airborne Division at Lamon Bay the next day. The 1st Cavalry Brigade [5th and 12th Cavalry] pushed into Bicol Peninsula by 12 April 1945 and the Japanese defenders were pocketed north of Mt Matassana Bundoc by 16 April. This area was reduced by the division's 2nd Cavalry Brigade [7th and 8th Cavalry] commencing 17 April. Beginning on 2 May the 5th Cavalry probed Mt Isarong for the next two weeks. The 1st Cavalry Division was relieved of its combat mission on 26 June 1945 and engaged exclusively in training at Lucena, where it had been since 6 May. The division was in this posture when hostilities ended.

On 2 September 1945 the 1st Cavalry Division landed at Tokyo Bay and had the honor of being the first into Tokyo as it had been the first into Manila. For the regiment it was the start of five years of soft-easy occupation duty in Japan. During World War 2 two additional members of the 5th Cavalry were awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. Its campaign credits were: New Guinea, Bismark Archipelago [with arrowhead], Leyte [with arrowhead], Luzon. On 29 March 1949 the 5th Cavalry was reorganized with the troops redesignated as companies. Then in June 1950 as the regiment was preparing to embark on an amphibious training exercise war broke out in Korea.

Pulled out of Japan the 1st Cavalry Division was the third United States Army division stationed in Japan to be hastily sent to Korea. The division made an unopposed amphibious landing at Pohang on Korea's eastern coast on

18 July 1950. The 5th Cavalry which had been reduced to only two battalions in the post war era was the second regiment to come ashore. The 1st Cavalry Division which had been reduced to only three regiments was given the mission of relieving the shattered 24th Infantry Division at Yongdong and to block the North Korean's advance toward Taegu astride the Taegu-Taejon road. The 5th Cavalry was pushed forward to act as the division reserve. On 28-29 July 1950 during rescue and blocking operations the regiment sustained 275 casualties. Then as the 1st Cavalry Division withdrew to the Naktong River and onto the northwest sector of the Pusan Perimeter the 5th Cavalry acted as the division's rear guard. The 5th Cavalry was given the Waegwan sector on the main Taejon-Taegu highway, where a secondary road from the southwest intersected. The Waegwan sector would be a source of heavy fighting for the 5th Cavalry. In September the regiment received its third battalion which had been hurriedly slapped together in the states and shipped to Korea. This new battalion had been the 3d Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment, from Camp Carson, Colorado. On 5 September the 1st Cavalry Division ordered a general withdrawal to an area 8 miles above Taegu. And when the battle of Taegu was over the three battalions in the 5th Cavalry were so low in strength as to be scarcely combat effective.

Then on 22 September the 1st Cavalry Division started its famous dash up the Korean Peninsula to link up with X Corps that had landed at Inchon on 16 September. The official link up was made on 27 September. With the 1st Cavalry Division chosen to lead I Corps' attack into North Korea the 5th Cavalry was given the mission of spearheading the motor march to Kaesong where I Corps was assembling for its invasion across the 38th parallel into North Korea. The attack started on 9 October 1950 with the division attacking up the Seoul-Pyongyang highway. On 20 October with the 5th Cavalry leading the way the 1st Cavalry Division entered the North Korean capital of Pyongyang and thus was the first United States division to do so. Reaching its farthest northern point of advance into North Korea the 5th Cavalry was behind the 8th Cavalry north of Unsan when two Chinese divisions attacked Unsan at dusk on 1 November 1950.

During late November and early December 1950 Eighth Army started a southward withdrawal and during the week of 6-13 December it withdrew below the 38th Parallel and back into South Korea to a line at the Imjin River. The 1st Cavalry Division subsequently moved north and northeast of Seoul the South Korean capital to backstop a South Korean Army division. Under communist attack Eighth Army fell back again this time to the Han River. Then it fell

back even farther southward. Finally on 25 January 1951 with the 5th Cavalry in reserve the 1st Cavalry Division attacked as part of an Eighth Army general offensive. On 29 January the 5th Cavalry was meeting strong Chinese resistance north of Surwon-Wonju highway having come out of division reserve on the 26th. On 15 February the 5th Cavalry was sent across the Han River to relieve the besieged 23d Infantry at Chipyeong. With infantry riding atop tanks and running a deadly communist gauntlet of fire the 5th Cavalry broke through and relieved the besieged infantrymen at Chipyeong.

On 3 June 1951 the 1st Cavalry Division and 3d Infantry Division as part of Operation Piledriver attacked northward and reached the outskirts of Chorwon on the 9th. Subsequently the 1st Cavalry Division relieved the South Korean 4th Division on Line Wyoming. Later on 3 October the 1st Cavalry Division took about sixteen days of hard bloody fighting to advance 6 miles to Line Jamestown. During this time with almost the entire division engaged the 1st Cavalry Division took 2,000 casualties. At that time the corps commander ordered his corps to hold on that line and dig-in. One month later the battered 1st Cavalry Division was withdrawn from Korea and returned to Japan. Then on 10 February 1953 the 5th Cavalry along with the 61st Field Artillery Battalion, and A Battery, 29th AAA AW Battalion, were sent back into Korea where they went to Pusan and Koji-do to relieve the 7th Cavalry. On 27 April the 5th Cavalry, less 3d Battalion, and Heavy Mortar Company, returned to Japan. The units remaining in Korea continued security missions until summer. During the fighting in Korea three more members of the 5th Cavalry were awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. And for its actions in Korea the regiment received the following campaign credit: UN Defensive, UN Offensive, CCF Intervention, First UN Counteroffensive, CCF Spring Offensive, UN Summer-Fall Offensive, Second Korean Winter, Third Korean Winter.

Following its return to Japan the 5th Cavalry remained assigned to the 1st Cavalry Division until 15 October 1957 when it was relieved from the division. One month later the regiment was organized as a parent regiment under the Army's Combat Arms Regimental System [CARS]. Company C the 3d Squadron, 5th Cavalry's lineage decendent was inactivated in Japan and relieved from assignment to the 1st Cavalry Division on 15 November 1957. On 15 April 1958 Company C was redesignated as Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 3d Reconnaissance Squadron, 5th Cavalry. At the same time its organic units were constituted. The 3d Reconnaissance Squadron, 5th Cavalry was activated on 1 July 1958 and assigned to the 9th Infantry Division at Fort Carson, Colorado,

where it served until the division's inactivation there on 31 January 1962.

In the summer of 1965 it was announced by then Secretary of the Army, Stanly R. Resor, at the annual meeting of the Association of the U.S. Army in Washington, D.C., that the 9th Infantry Division was going to be reactivated in early 1966. The 9th Infantry Division was to be organized under the Army's ROAD concept and would not be area oriented to any specific geographic location such as South Vietnam. Instead the 9th Infantry Division would be trained to meet contingencies worldwide.

For the squadron its reactivation would bring it a redesignation from Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 3d Reconnaissance Squadron, 5th Cavalry, to, Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 3d Squadron, 5th Cavalry. Its lettered troops were also redesignated. And D Troop the squadron's air cavalry troop was constituted and allotted to the Regular Army as an organic element of the 9th Infantry Division. Activation day was set for 1 February 1966 at Fort Riley, Kansas.

ACTIVATION AND DEPLOYMENT OF THE 9TH INFANTRY Division

On 1 February 1966 in ceremonies at Fort Riley's King Field House the 9th Infantry Division was activated by Major General George S. Eckhardt<sup>5</sup>. General Eckhardt had been serving as Commanding General of Fort Riley since August 1965 when he was diverted to Riley after his return from Iran to await command of the 9th Infantry Division upon its activation. At activation the 9th Infantry Division would become the Army's seventeenth combat division and would be a nondeploying division trained to meet contingencies worldwide.

The 9th Infantry Division was to be filled with men sent directly to Fort Riley after their induction into the Army where they would be trained by division cadre and would receive basic combat training [BCT] and advanced individual training [AIT] in their units. Recently expanded to over one-hundred thousand acres Fort Riley had recently deployed its 1st Infantry Division to Vietnam so there was adequate facilities available to house the 9th Infantry Division once its personnel started arriving.

Plans drawn-up in December 1965 by Headquarters, Fort Riley, called for the division to organize and train in three increments. Each increment was to consist of a brigade headquarters with three maneuver battalions, a 105mm artillery battalion, and a proportionate share of combat support and combat service support elements of the division. The first increment with the 1st Brigade was to be the largest and would contain the essential division base elements. The second increment would be the 2d Brigade and the third increment would be the 3d Brigade. The plans called for units to conduct basic combat training, advanced individual training, and advanced unit training.

But as the time neared for the start of basic training problems developed in the receipt of cadre personnel. It was planned that not all of the cadre would arrive at Fort Riley at one time. But, instead the cadre, fillers, and equipment, would be made available by the date desired. The first increment was to arrive prior to 1 February. The second increment during the period 1-25 March. And the third increment during the period 1-22 April. Upon activation the authorized cadre strength for enlisted men and manning level for officers was: 485 officers, 31 warrant officers, and 2,785 enlisted men for a total strength of 3,301 personnel. But, by late March approximately only 200 officers and 700 cadre had shown up. Serious training problems developed when many arrived later than planned. In addition to the cadre understrength a grade imbalance in the cadre also presented serious problems.

Fort Riley units themselves were called upon to provide cadre personnel

for the 9th Infantry Division. And the two 1st Infantry Division units left behind when the division went overseas, the 1st Battalion, 63d Armor and 5th Battalion, 32d Artillery [Honest John], both provided the division with wheel mechanic cadre. The 207th Military Police Company provided key personnel to the division. And Headquarters and Headquarters Company, United States Army Garrison also provided 180 personnel. But the original plan had called for cadre training of from one to three weeks duration. But the delayed arrival of cadre personnel precluded much of this training.

Shortly before the first increment started its basic training General Eckhardt decided to modify the original training program by having the division artillery commander organize a division basic training committee. The modification was made because of the inexperience of the cadre, large number of physical profiles, low rank, few majors and captains, the delay in cadre arrival and the corresponding lack of time available for cadre training. The committee was composed primarily from cadre personnel for the 15th Engineer Battalion and the 5th Cavalry, which were both to organize in August and train with the third increment. Plus a few carefully selected and trained experts in the subject they taught.

Basic training for the first increment started on 11 April. Prior to basic training each increment were issued M14 rifles, bayonets, scabboards, and protective masks. Fifty percent of a units TOE equipment was to be issued during basic and the remainder during advanced individual training. One-half of the scheduled instruction the new recruits would receive would be from the basic training committee. That included all rifle qualification firing, bayonet, hand-to-hand combat, and hand grenade training.

During February the 9th Infantry Division had 2,200 personnel who had taken basic training at Fort Riley for assignment to the 5th Infantry Division [M] at Fort Carson, Colorado, assigned to the division. Most of these men were placed in schools that produced soldiers with hard [ten or more weeks of training] and soft skills required to fill vacancies which were not provided in the cadre authorization. Remaining soldiers from this group were placed in non-divisional units to receive advanced individual training with the ultimate goal of providing the division with as many trained soldiers as possible. Also used was the Fort Riley Post Education Center where training was conducted in both hard and soft skills.

In the 5th Cavalry each troop in the squadron had the need for soldiers with hard skills that required more than ten weeks of schooling. Headquarters

and Headquarters Troop: three armor communications specialists, one welder, and two medical specialists. A, B, and C Troops: two armor communications specialists. D Troop: nine helicopter mechanics, two aviation electronics equipment repairmen, and one armor communication specialist.

Then during March and April an unexpected development occurred when the division received 2,000 AIT trained soldiers who were not programed. Many of these men were assigned to division base units while others were sent to develop hard skills. Approximately 200 of these men were trained engineers and they became the nucleus of the division's 15th Engineer Battalion. In March the division was informed by CONARC that 2,930 AIT trained fillers would be provided for the units in the third increment, thereby enabling these elements to organize and go directly into basic unit training instead of basic training in July instead of August. It also meant that one hundred percent of the TOE equipment for this increment would have to be on hand at that time. It also placed a burden on the support command as it meant that the 3d Brigade support slice would have to be trained and ready.

On 4 May 1966 the 9th infantry Division received a warning order for its deployment to Vietnam. The effect was felt almost immediately. Because the 9th Infantry Division had not been a deployable unit when activated and there had been no requirement that personnel assigned to the division had to be deployable to Vietnam. Consequently, many Vietnam returnees, and personnel returning from Korea or other unaccompanied areas were assigned to the division. When the issue was resolved the division lost 2,284 non-deployable personnel including almost half of the division's cadre. An additional 400 of its best soldiers were lost to Officers Candidate School, thus removing the top layer of potential leaders.

Subsequently following the decision to send the division to Vietnam the 9th Infantry Division received a request from Military Assistance Command, Vietnam [MACV] for the division to have its 15th Engineer Battalion incountry by September to assist in preparing the base camp for the arrival of the division<sup>6</sup>. Fortunately, 400 fillers had already been assigned to the engineers. These men and cadre left the battalion 600 men below authorized strength. Although they had originally been scheduled to start AIT by 4 August, two companies began basic unit training in June. The 15th Engineer Battalion was able to complete basic unit training, command maintenance management inspections [CMMI], and its operational readiness test in August and deploy by the end of September.



A plan from MACV also indicated that the division would be actively engaged in riverine warfare. With the decision to deploy it to Vietnam the 9th Infantry Division became MACV's "Z" Division. The designation "Z" Division was given to the planning designation of a division to be deployed to South Vietnam and employed in the IV Corps area-Mekong Delta. Although it was not generally known in the division, the division's training period as established in Army training programs had been reduced in order to conclude at the time of the beginning of the Vietnam dry season in December 1966 when the MACV plan called for the introduction of United States ground forces into the Mekong Delta.

The division training program was limited to eight weeks for basic combat training, eight weeks for advanced individual training and eight weeks for both basic and advanced unit training-a total of twenty-four weeks. This compression of training time eliminated four weeks from each of the unit's training periods and the four weeks usually allowed for field training exercises and division maneuvers-a total of twelve weeks from the normal Army training time for a division.

And when the third increment entered its unit training cycle the ranges and training areas at Fort Riley became overcrowded. The post responded to the training requirements of the division by constructing seven platoon live fire tactical ranges, one 90mm tank gunnery range, one company live fire tactical range, five rotary wing aircraft mockups, and one replica of a Vietnamese village with boat dock and tunnel complex.

Other training restrictions imposed centered around the lack of mission essential equipment and the short supply of certain types of ammunition. The lack of blank ammunition for the M16E1 precluded the issue of these weapons for individual and unit training. The M14 instead was used through all phases of training. Then just prior to deployment the M16E1 was issued to everyone and each man was allotted 52 rounds of ammunition for qualification firing.

On 15 July Department of the Army provided a modified table of organization for the division to review. It provided for five rifle companies, a headquarters company, and a combat support company in each of the division's infantry battalions. The MTOE created approximately 1,200 additional spaces in the division. But higher headquarters indicated they could not provide personnel to fill those spaces. But because of division personnel management planning and the receipt of those unprogrammed March and April fillers there were sufficient personnel at Fort Riley to form those companies. At this time

the division's training program was decentralized because the 3d Brigade would not be conducting AIT and the 1st Brigade was just completing AIT. Since many men assigned to the 1st and 3d Brigades had only completed basic training it was necessary for them to complete AIT concurrent with basic unit training. The brigade commanders were to determine their own requirements and keep the division informed.

In July the 9th Infantry Division and the 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, started project "Helping Hand". The project was designed to facilitate the exchange of information between command and staff organizations of the two units. The 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division [Seperate] had been deployed to South Vietnam in July 1965 and was in the II Corps Tactical Zone with its base at Phan Rang when "Helping Hand" was initiated. From the 1st Brigade the 9th Infantry Division received much helpful information concerning tactical operations, civil affairs, and psychological activities during the project. At the same time General Eckhardt directed that the division and post staffs be separated on 1 July 1966. Initially the deferred arrival of officers had presented a problem. Organization of the division staff was necessarily delayed in order to assign officers to the brigades as early as possible. So to facilitate operation of the division staff, it was satellited on the post staff. The significant impact was the requirement to train the division staff to become self sufficient and retention of the post staff to administer the deployment of thirty-three units during the following year. And on 16 July an advance movement directive was published by division establishing equipment and personnel readiness dates.

On 1 August 5th Army Command Maintenance Management Inspections were started. These inspections of the division units would continue until 21 October. In late August a provisional advance planning group under Assistant Division Commander, Brigadier General Morgan G. Roseborough, and consisting of officer representatives from operations, logistics, signal, civil affairs, and engineer elements were sent to Vietnam. The advance planning group went to Headquarters, United States Army, Vietnam [USARV]. From this group information on which to guide training and preparation of the division for overseas was received.

As the 5th Cavalry organized and trained it was stationed on the eastern edge of the Fort Riley Military Reservation at Camp Funston a World War 2 cantonment area built to house the 2d Cavalry Division which was activated at Fort Riley in early 1941. The 857 man 5th Cavalry was under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Sidney S. Haszard. And the squadron's armored punch was

was its M48A3 Patton tanks which each of the squadron's three line troops possessed. The Patton tank was first introduced in 1952 and the A3 diesel powered variant was armed with a 90mm main gun, a .50-caliber machine gun, and a 7.62mm coaxial machine gun. Each troop possessed M113 Armored Personnel Carriers and M106 107mm Mortar Carriers. Both vehicles were gasoline powered. And each also possessed the massive M88 gasoline powered tank retriever. While Headquarters and headquarters Troop possessed M577 Command Post Carriers, M113 Armored Personnel Carriers, and M88 tank retrievers. While D Troop the squadron's air cavalry troop possessed OH-23 "Raven" light observation helicopters, UH-1D "Huey" transport helicopters, and UH-1B "Huey" gunships.

Organizationally the 5th Cavalry consisted of headquarters staff sections, consisting of: S-1 Adjutant, S-2 Intelligence, S-3 Operations and Training, S-4 Supply, Ground Surveillance, Commo Section, and Medical Section. Headquarters Troop consisted of: Troop Headquarters, Ammo Section, P.O.L. Section, Headquarters Troop Maintenance, and Squadron Maintenance. Troops A, B, and C consisted of a Troop Headquarters, Radar and Commo Section, Maintenance Section plus three line platoons. The line platoons consisted of a Infantry Section, Tank Section, Scout Section, and Mortar Section. D Troop consisted of a Troop Headquarters, Flight Operations, Aero Rifle Platoon, Aero Scout Platoon, Aero Weapons Platoon, and Service Platoon<sup>7</sup>.

On 16 September Department of the Army directed the division to convert one of its eight infantry battalions to a mechanized infantry battalion. This conversion gave the division seven infantry battalions and two mechanized infantry battalions. Then in late September Department of the Army announced that certain personnel and mission essential equipment could not be provided for the rifle companies added by MTOE on 16 July even though these companies had been trained and passed ATT's. So the excess personnel were reassigned to Riley units. Administratively the 9th Infantry Division had already lost one artillery battalion when its 3d Battalion, 28th Artillery [Honest John] had been reduced to zero strength and its personnel transferred to other division units.

Then on 19 September the 2d Brigade's commanding officers acting as the division representative and a staff officer, plus the division support command commanding officer, and a representative of the division signal officer proceeded to Coronado, California, to attend a conference at the Navy's Amphibious Base, on the Mobile Afloat Force [Mobile Riverine Force]. At

the conference the Navy agreed to conduct a riverine course for the 2d Brigade staff, the battalion commanders and their staffs, and the brigade supporting unit commanders. Also it was agreed that the Amphibious Training School would provide a team at Fort Riley during December for the purpose of training selected men from brigade and battalion in techniques of water-proofing, small boat loading and handling, and combat offloading from transports.

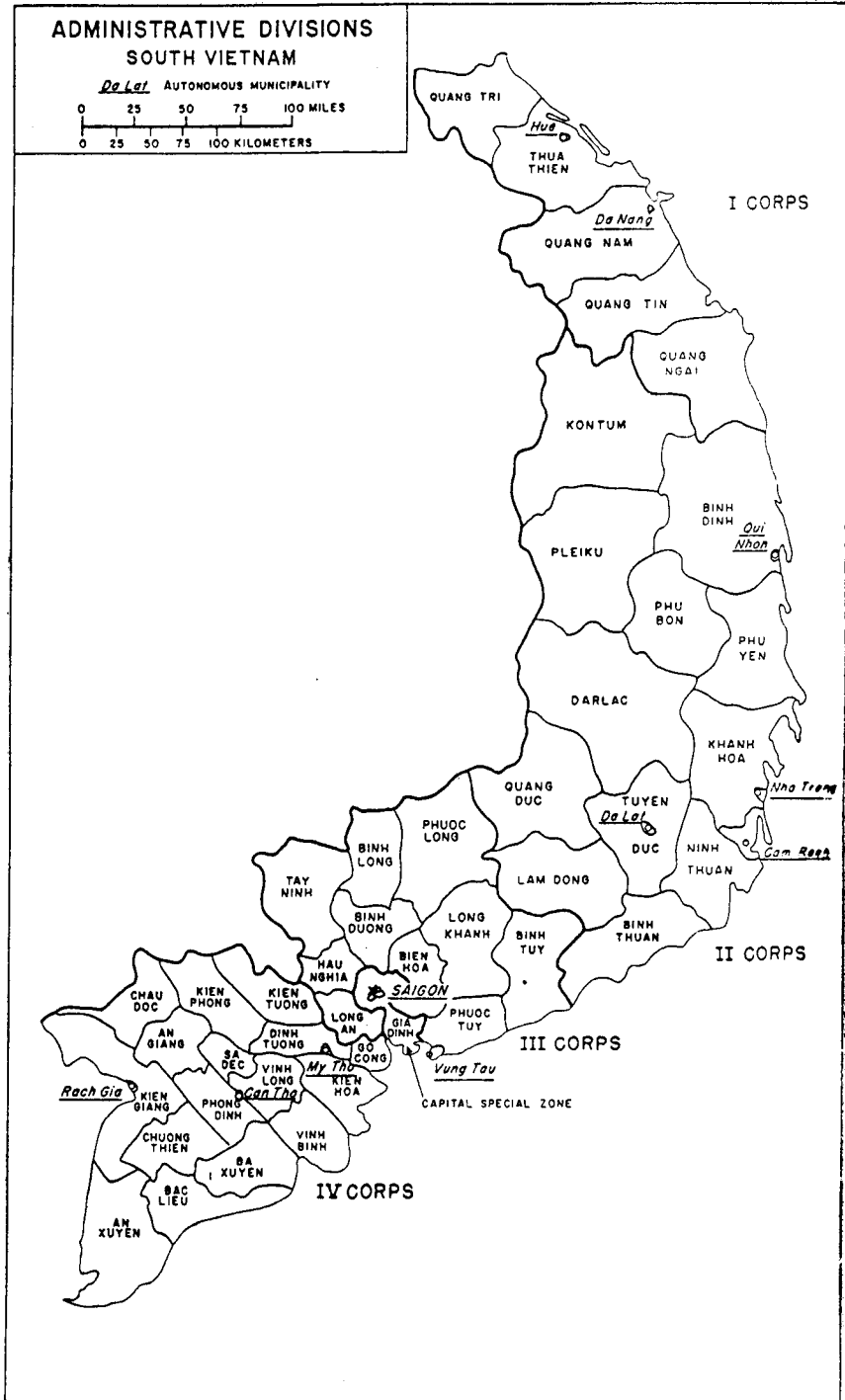
General Eckhardt and a small staff including the 2d Brigade commander left for a three week orientation visit to Vietnam on 9 October. The 2d Brigade had been designated the division component to the Mobile Riverine Force. Their visit to South Vietnam was to reconnoiter the riverine environment and get a preview of the requirement for riverine operations.

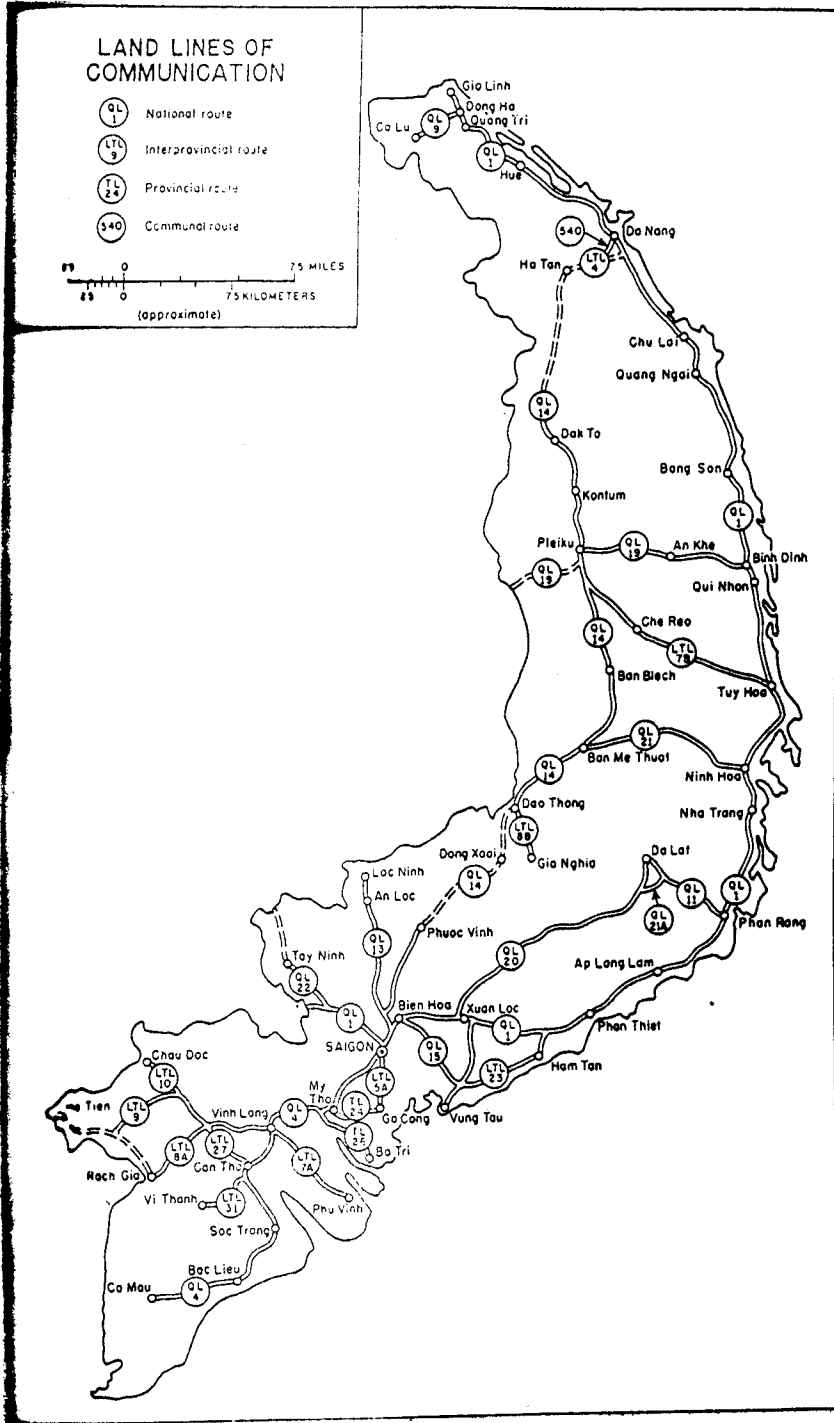
Division strength as of 30 September was [authorized/assigned]: officers 987/867; warrant officers 175/91; enlisted men 14,721/15,610, for an aggregate strength of 15,883/16,586. At the same time the division was short 1,097 reportable items of equipment. As of 1 November both manpower and equipment had shown some improvement.

Movement of the 9th Infantry Division to Vietnam would be both by air and surface movement. Advance parties would move by air while the main body would move by surface. CATZ or Military Airlift Command charter flights were from either the Manhattan airport adjacent to Fort Riley or Forbes Air Forces Base at Topeka, Kansas, 64 miles east of Fort Riley. Embarkation for surface movement would be at the Military Ocean Terminal, Bay Area [MOTBA] at the Oakland Army Base, Oakland, California. Movement to Oakland would be by train.

Finally in early December it was time for the 9th Infantry to start its deployment to South Vietnam incrementally with the 3d Brigade moving first, then followed by the 1st Brigade, and finally the 2d Brigade. On 8 December 1966 the advance parties of the Division Headquarters and the 3d Brigade arrived in Vietnam. On 19 December the 9th Infantry Division marked its official entry into Vietnam when General Eckhardt led the first increment of division support troops onto the beach at Vung Tau and was greeted by General William C. Westmoreland, Commanding General, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam.

On 10-11 December 19 officers and 516 enlisted men of the 5th Cavalry departed Fort Riley by train for Oakland, California, which they reached on the 12th. 1 officers and 171 enlisted men were then embarked on the USNS Rose with 1st Brigade elements. 18 officers and 345 enlisted men were embarked on the USNS Upshur with combat support elements. Twenty-two days later the Rose





arrived at Vung Tau on 2 January 1967. The next day the Upshur arrived. Once the troops had disembarked they were transported to the division base camp truck. The two hour and forty-five minute journey went north along National Route 15 [QL-15] to Bearcat [Camp Martin Cox] 36 miles north of Vung Tau. Bearcat was located 20 miles west of Saigon and 10 miles south of Long Binh in Bien Hoa Province's Long Thanh District.

Development of Bear Cat started with the arrival of the 15th Engineer Battalion on 20 October 1966. At that time Camp Martin Cox consisted of a cleared area of approximately 441 acres. The engineer's mission was to expand the existing camp to support the division main, two infantry brigades, and necessary support units. By 15 January 1967 the 15th Engineer Battalion working 24 hours a day had constructed approximately 8 miles of road, completed assorted drainage, prefabricated 97 latrines, 89 showers, 67 mess hall frames and poured concrete pads for each of the prefabricated buildings. In addition the engineer's cleared approximately 1,470 acres of unsecured jungle. By 30 April 1967 Bearcat would cover 1,070 acres of land. Bearcat was to initially accommodate the entire division until the completion of Dong Tam near My Tho, 59 miles southwest of Bearcat, in Dinh Tuong Province, IV Corps <sup>8</sup>.

INITIAL COMBAT OPERATIONS IN III CORPS

With just two weeks in Vietnam the 1st Brigade prepared to launch operation Colby in the Phuoc Chi Secret Zone, an area covered mostly by jungle and dense vegetation. The targeted area reportedly contained the base camps of the Viet Cong 265th and D-800 Battalions, both were reported to be elements of the 274th Viet Cong Main Force Regiment, a 5th Viet Cong Division unit. For its first operation the 1st Brigade would have one cavalry squadron and five infantry battalions under its operational control. The units committed to the operation were the 5th Cavalry; 2d, 3d, and 4th Battalions, 39th Infantry; 2d Battalion, 60th Infantry and the 5th Battalion, 60th Infantry [Mechanized].

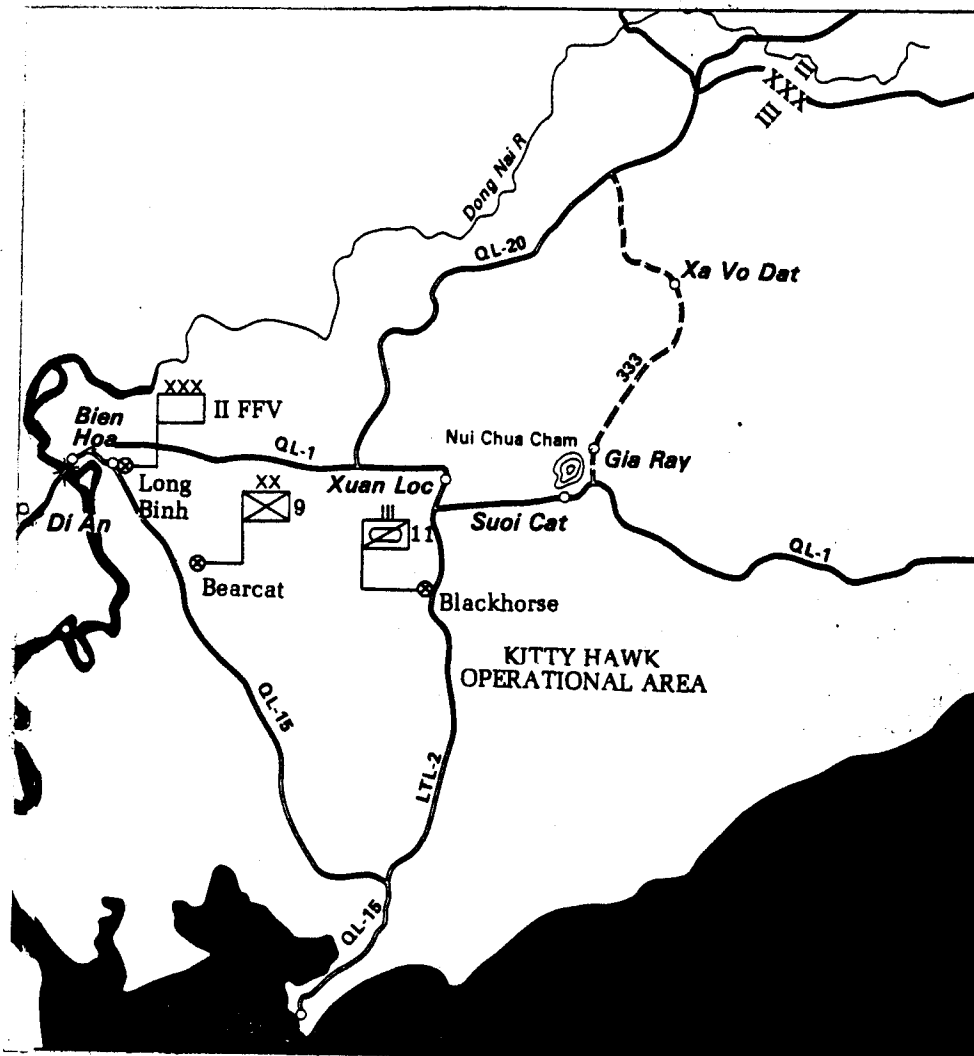
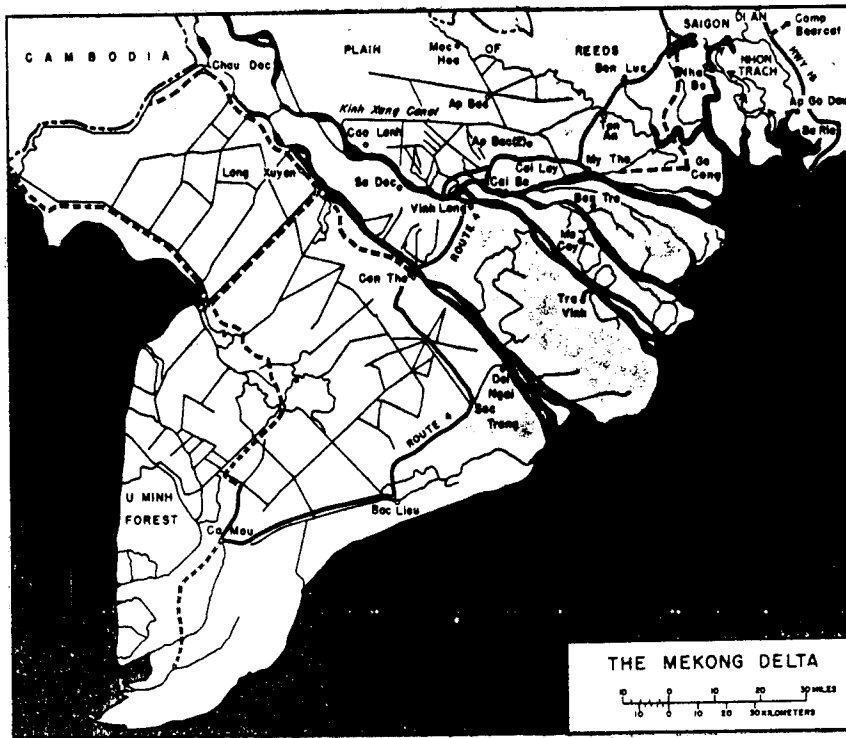
For Operation Colby the 5th Cavalry had been designated Task Force Saberleg and had one company from the 3d Battalion, 39th Infantry, plus one platoon from A Company, 15th Engineer Battalion in direct support. The squadron also had one armored vehicle launched bridge [AVLB] and one tank dozer under its operational control. Both the AVLB and tank dozer were from the 15th Engineer Battalion. The engineer's had been issued M48A3 Tank Dozers instead of Combat Engineer Vehicles [CEV]. So the engineers and the 5th Cavalry were the only units in the 9th Infantry Division with tanks.

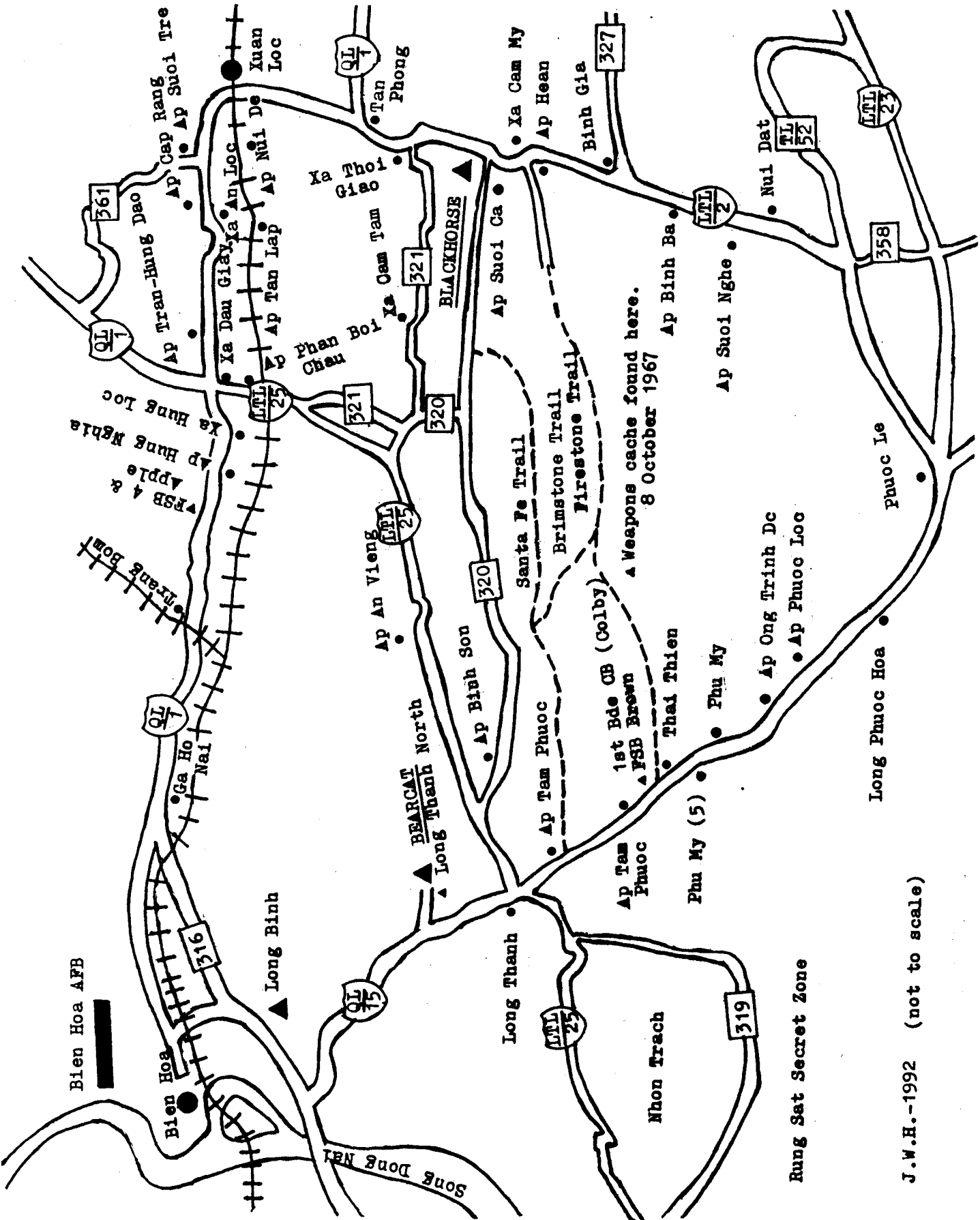
On D-day the 1st Brigade planned to use both a communications and movement deception. But due to the operational commitment of the 3d Brigade on who's frequency and call signs the deception was to be undertaken the deception was unworkable. But the movement deception would place both the 5th Cavalry and 5th Battalion, 60th Infantry [M] on Highway 15 as route in security in an effort to deceive the Viet Cong into thinking it was in preparation for another troop movement from Vung Tau.

D-day, 20 January 1967, the 5th Cavalry had a multiple mission to accomplish. Moving southward the squadron initiated road security from Thae Thien to Phu My. At the same time the squadron established the 1st Brigade's combat base north of Thae Thien, 13 miles south of Bearcat. In addition the squadron secured brigade objective 1 at Binh Son and established a fire support base there. The division's 1st Battalion, 11th Artillery [105T] placed a 105mm battery there and a platoon of 8-inch and a platoon of 175mm self-propelled guns at the brigade's combat base.

Previously the 3d Brigade had conducted Operation Silver Lake its first Vietnam operation in the Binh Son Plantation area. And the 3d Squadron, 11th Cavalry had conducted Operation Hastings<sup>9</sup> in the area in October 1966.







Rung Sat Secret Zone

J.W.H.-1992 (not to scale)

On the 19th of February the 3d Battalion, 39th Infantry had relieved the 2d Battalion, 60th Infantry and the 5th Battalion, 60th Infantry [M] of their Binh Son security mission. For Operation Colby the 39th Infantry had one 5th Cavalry platoon operating with it. On D-day plus 3 the 2d and 4th Battalions, 39th Infantry would be air assaulted into the operational area.

The following day the 5th Cavalry and the 5th Battalion, 60th Infantry [M] launched their respective search and destroy operations with the cavalry on the south and the infantry on the north. At mid-day squadron forces apprehended one detainee. At the same time an additional 105mm battery was established at a fire support base at brigade objective 2. The next day 22 February the 5th Cavalry pushed its reconnaissance 4½ miles eastward from Highway 15 and secured brigade objective 6 without opposition. At mid-afternoon the following day C Troop was hit by Viet Cong small arms fire. But when the troop returned fire the Viet Cong broke contact. During the day nineteen pounds of enemy documents were captured. The squadron also relieved the 3d Battalion, 39th Infantry securing the brigade combat base.

At 5:30 a.m. the next morning C Troop engaged five Viet Cong with 90mm cannister fire. An hour later another Viet Cong force believed to be recovering the bodies of the first group were also engaged with cannister fire. A search at daylight revealed no bodies but much blood and drag marks. During the day as the search and destroy operations were continued an Armored Cavalry Assault Vehicle [ACAV] hit an anti-tank mine resulting in light casualties amongst the crew. Mines continued to plague the 5th Cavalry the next day. An Armored Personnel Carrier [APC] was hit by a Viet Cong claymore mine which resulted in one casualty. And an ACAV was hit by a Chinese Communist anti-tank grenade which resulted in light casualties amongst the crew. And one platoon was attacked by approximately 10 Viet Cong who opened fire on the platoon with small arms and automatic weapons. Dense jungle prohibited pursuit as the Viet Cong broke contact. Also, during the day an element broke 3/4 of a mile of trail through the jungle.

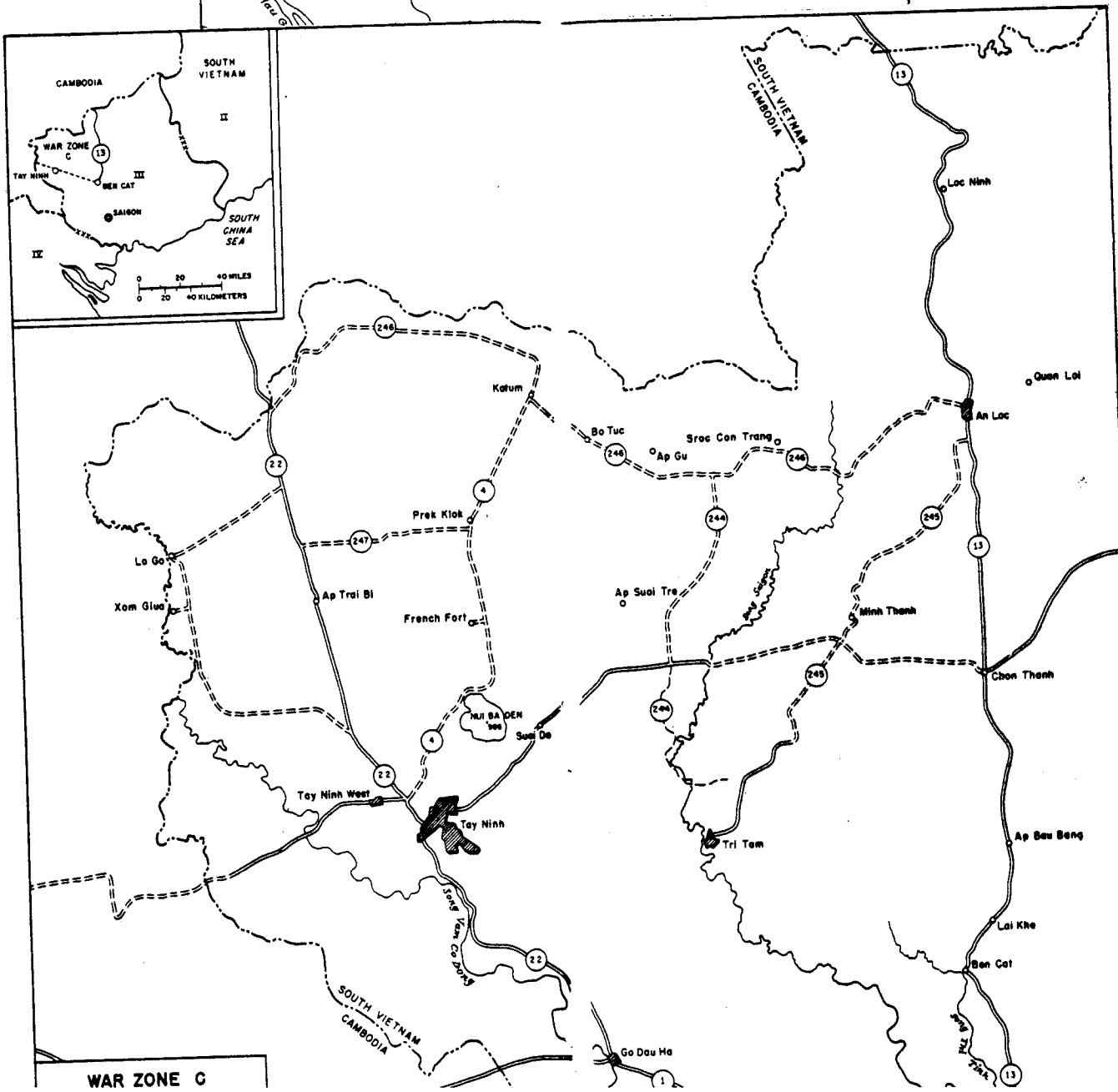
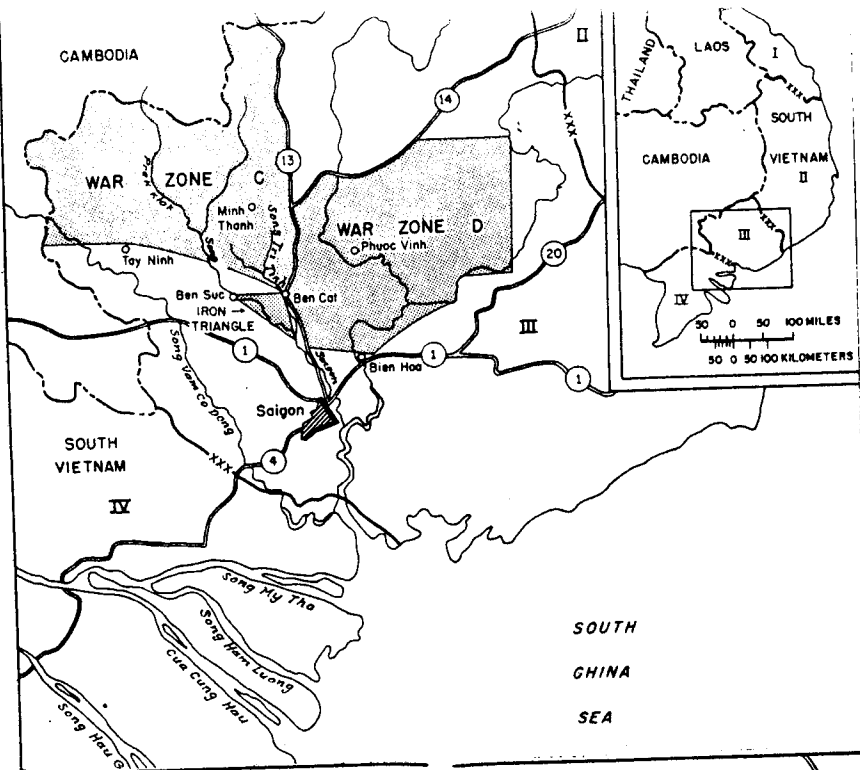
The following day 26 January the 5th Cavalry pressed forward with it's search and destroy operation and prepared for the extraction of brigade elements. During the day squadron forces captured an additional six pounds of documents. The next day the 1st Brigade began repositioning its forces in preparation for the start of Operation Iola the next day. For Operation Iola the 1st Brigade would be securing Highway 15 from Long Thanh to Barra for the movement of 2d Brigade forces from Vung Tau and their escort to

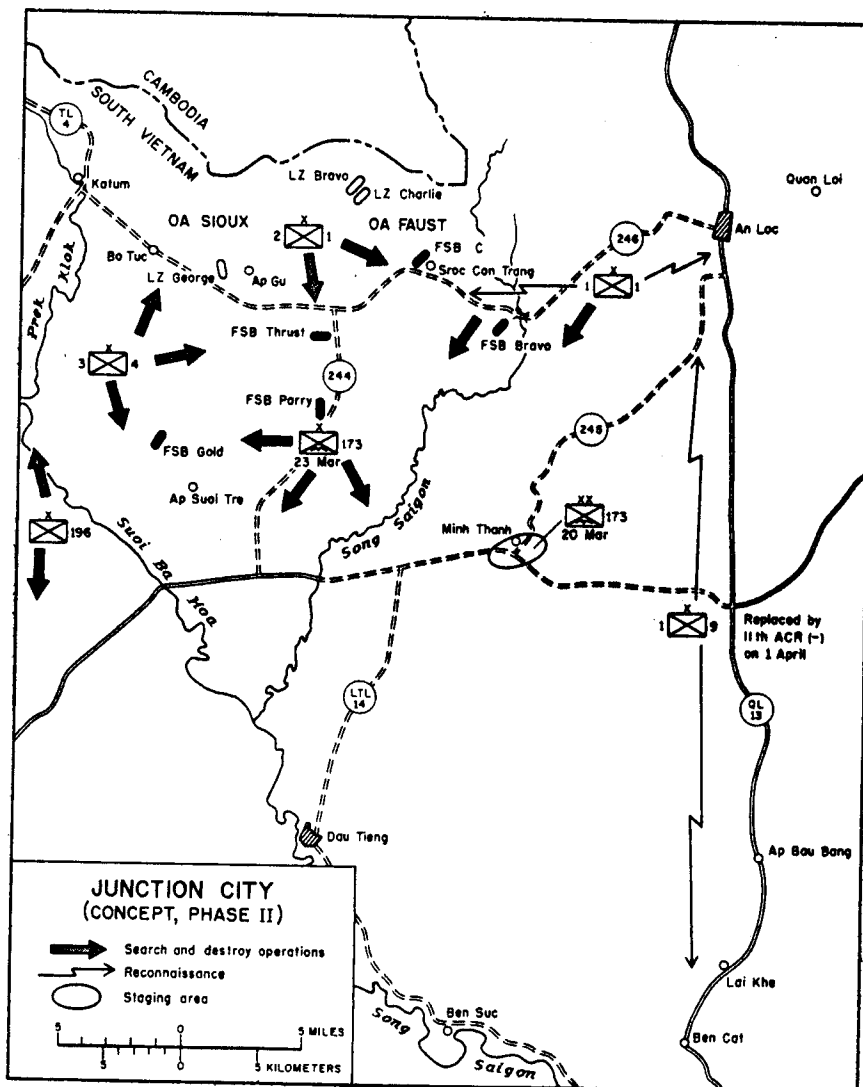
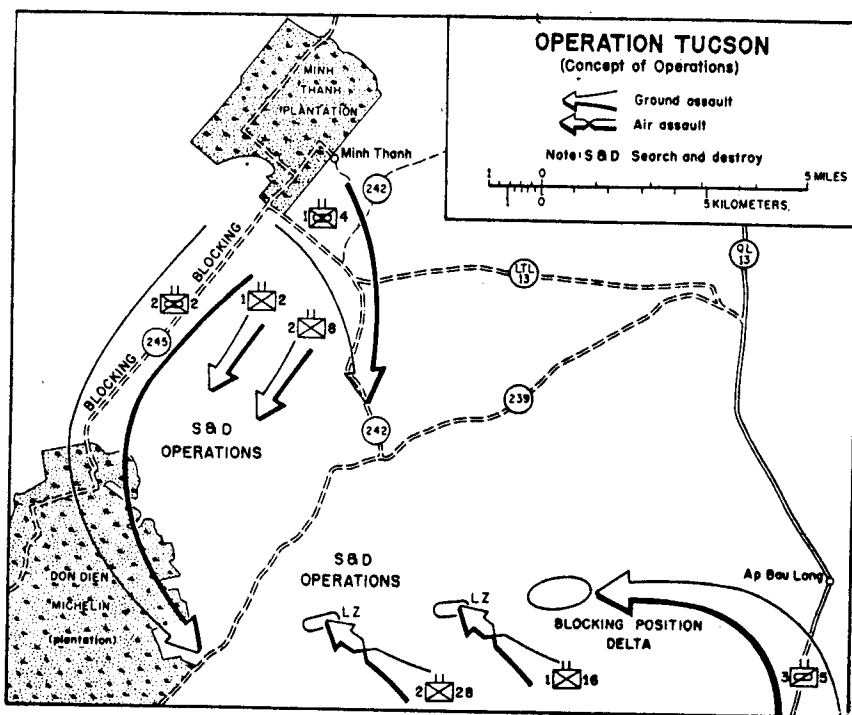
Bearcat. In addition to the continuation of search and destroy operations in the area of operation assigned for Operation Colby. The 2d Brigade was the final increment of the division to deploy to Vietnam and there were 2 officers and 157 enlisted members of the squadron inbound with this increment. During the day both the 3d and 4th Battalions, 39th Infantry were airlifted out of the jungle to positions along Highway 15 in preparation for security of the 2d Brigade elements. The 5th Cavalry secured the landing zones for the extraction of the infantry and effected cross attachment with other participating units. In addition to the 5th Cavalry the 2d, 3d and 4th Battalions, 39th Infantry, and the 3d Squadron, 11th Cavalry would be participating in the operation.

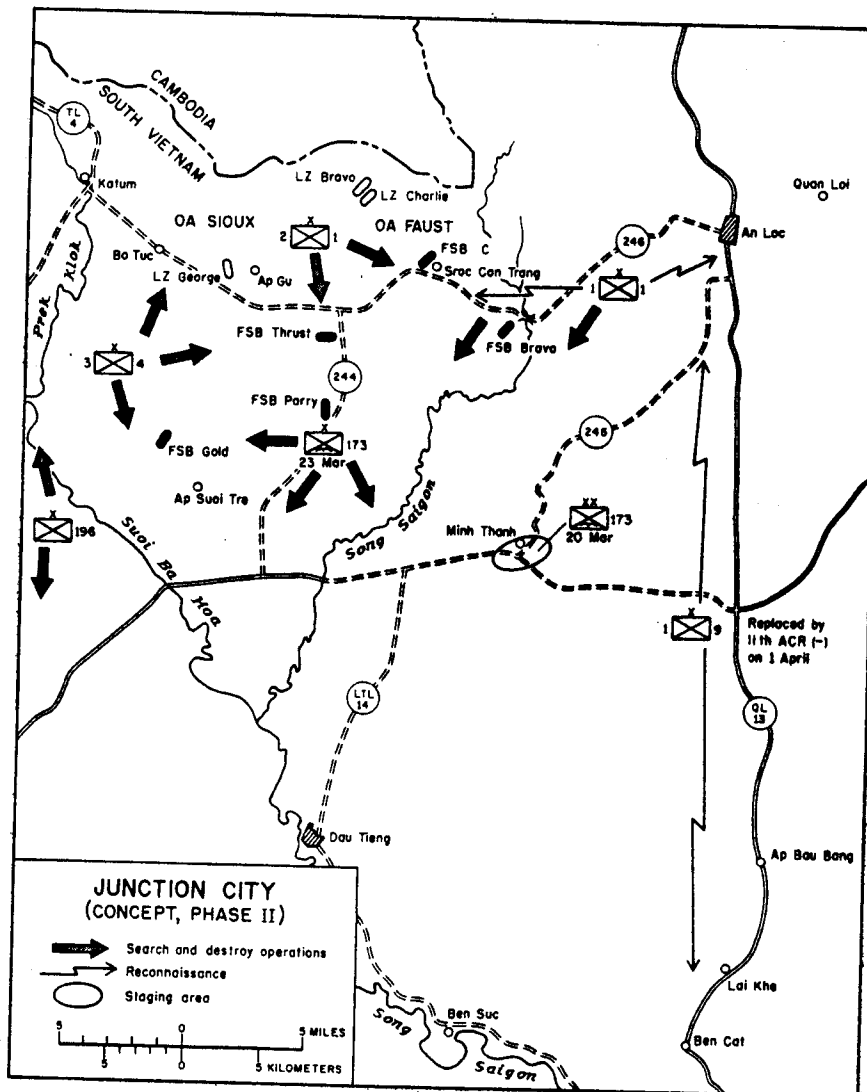
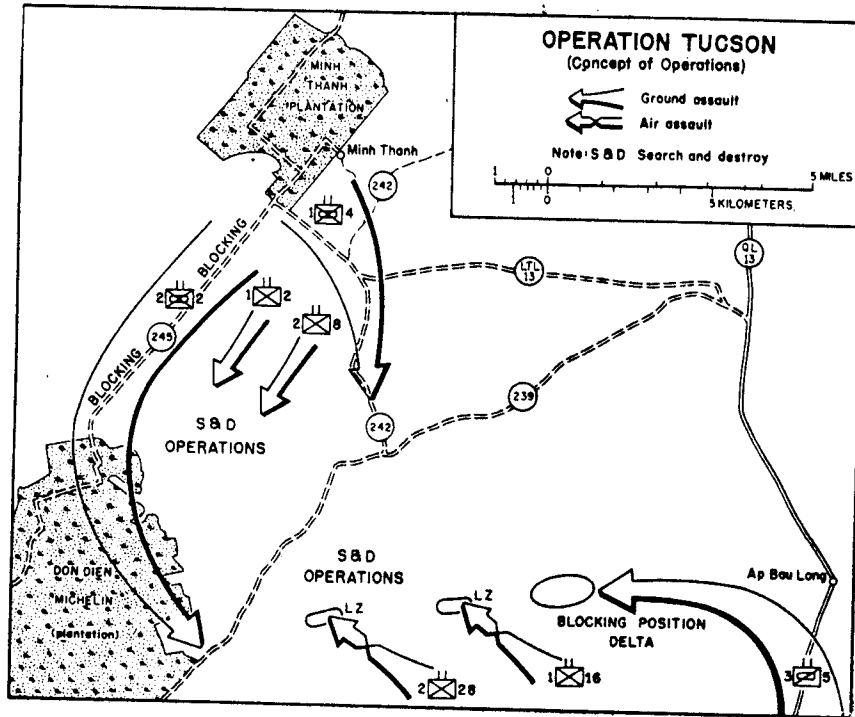
Operation Iola began the next day with the 3d and 4th Battalions, 39th Infantry occupying strong points and defending bases along Highway 15 as the 5th Cavalry, 2d Battalion, 39th Infantry and the 3d Squadron, 11th Cavalry continued search and destroy operations. For Iola the 5th Cavalry had been formed into a task force consisting of one troop from the 3d Squadron, 11th Cavalry, and a platoon from both the 3d and 4th Battalions, 39th Infantry. At the same time the squadron occupied strong points on Highway 15 and recovered down vehicles from the jungle. The following day the squadron continued its operational missions. Then at 7:45 p.m. A Troop was attacked by an estimated Viet Cong platoon along the Bien Hoa-Phuoc Tuy Province border, 2 miles east of Highway 15. Supported by mortars the Viet Cong had a 57mm recoilless rifle, small arms and automatic weapons. In response the troop called in supporting artillery fire and helicopter gunships. In this attack A Troop had 3 men killed and 13 wounded. Viet Cong losses were estimated at 3 killed and 12 wounded.

The next day the 5th Cavalry continued its search and destroy operations and occupying strong points along Highway 15. During the day the USNS Pope with the main body of the 2d Brigade onboard arrived at Vung Tau and disembarked on 31 January and February. The 5th Cavalry was responsible for escorting the convoys from Vung Tau to Bearcat. While division personnel landed at Vung Tau its vehicles and equipment were landed at the port of Saigon. On 31 January the USNS Geiger arrived at Vung Tau with combat support elements including members of the 5th Cavalry onboard.

At the same time the 1st Brigade stood down from Operation Iola and Task Force Truscott assumed control of the operation. Task Force Truscott was formed on 28 January by the 5th Battalion, 60th Infantry [M] with the 2d







Battalion, 60th Infantry, and had initially conducted operations in the vicinity of the Binh Son Rubber Plantation. During the day both the 2d and 4th Battalions, 39th Infantry returned to Bearcat. The 1st Brigade was scheduled to start Operation Big Spring the next day. And for the next five days Task Force Truscott continued to secure Highway 15 during the movement of 2d Brigade cargo from Vung Tau to Bearcat.

On 6 February the 2d Brigade commenced Operation Greenleaf in Long Thanh and adjacent Nhon Trach Districts of Bien Hoa Province. The 5th Cavalry was to be one of the participating units along with the 2d Battalion, 39th Infantry and 2d Battalion, 47th Infantry [Mechanized], and the 3d Battalion, 47th Infantry. The 2d Brigade deployed its forces from Binh Son in the east, west across Highway 15 along the southern portion of the Nhon Trach District, to the vicinity of Cau Vung Cam in the west. During the Tet holiday truce [8-12 February 1967] units remained in static locations to check Viet Cong repositioning of personnel and supplies. Search and destroy operations in the Nhon Trach followed the truce period.

But the 5th Cavalry was withdrawn from operation Greenleaf and placed under the operational control of the 1st Infantry Division's, 3d Brigade, for Operation Tucson being conducted by the 1st Infantry Division in War Zone C, approximately 50 miles northeast of Bearcat. Operation Tucson was one of two operations launched in early February 1967 that would position forces and material on the western and eastern extremities of the upcoming Operation Junction City area of operation. The 1st Infantry Division would be conducting Tucson with its 1st and 3d Brigades. Each brigade would have two infantry battalions and a cavalry squadron under their operational control. The operation was to be a search and destroy in the northern section of the Long Nguyen Secret Zone and the Michelin Rubber Plantation. The Viet Cong "Northern Rice Route" which was also a Viet Cong route for troop movement between War Zones C and D, lies in this area.

The 3d Brigade would be operating in the northern part Binh Duong Province northeast of Lai Khe and close to the eastern edge of the Michelin Rubber Plantation. Terrain in the operational area was flat to gently rolling. The vegetation was mostly dense jungle. And there were no civilian villages in the operational area. On 15 February 3d Brigade forces attacked. The 5th Cavalry moving north on highway 13 moved west from Ap Bau Long and southeast from Minh Thanh<sup>10</sup> for position Delta approximately 5 miles west of Highway 13, where the squadron established a blocking position. At the same time the 2d



Battalion, 28th Infantry and the 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry conducted unopposed air assaults into landing zones 1 and 2 respectively on the southern edge of the operational area, between the 5th Cavalry's blocking position and the eastern corner of the Michielin Rubber Plantation. The 2d Battalion, 28th Infantry conducted combat reconnaissance eastward along the northern boundary of Binh Duong Province while the 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry began moving westward along the same boundary. The 5th Cavalry also conducted search and destroy operations. Prior intelligence indicated that the 272d Viet Cong Regiment habitually used the area. And elements of the Phu Loi Battalion; C 61, the Ben Cat District Company and C45 the Chan Thanh District Platoon were also reportedly operating in the area and harrassing traffic along Highway 13.

The period 14-17 February was used for search and destroy and 3d Brigade forces captured 1,622 tons of rice, 140 tons of which was extracted; 27 tons of salt; 70 pounds of fish; and a small amount of ammunition and ordnance; miscellaneous other items; and a small amount of clothing and documents; 7 base camps and 37 bunkers. The rice was enough to have fed thirteen enemy battalions for a year. Almost all uncovered by 3d Brigade elements in caches 50 to 200 meters from the trail along which their initial landing zones were located. For the next four days the 1st Infantry Division completed its primary mission of positioning its troops for Junction City, with Tucson formally ending at mid-night on the 21st of February.

On 20 February the 5th Cavalry had went under the 1st Infantry Division's, 2d Brigade's operational control at 9:30 a.m. and closed at Phu Loi two hours later. The 2d Brigade was preparing to terminate Operation Suitland which was part of the division's Operation Lam Son 67 which was continuing. Lam Son 67 was the 8 February 1967 continuation of Lam Son II, a continuous revolutionary development support program started in May 1966 and terminated 8 February 1967. The next day the 5th Cavalry stood down for maintenance. On 27 February as part of Operation Lam Son 67 the 5th Cavalry participated in a seal and search of Binh My village in War Zone D 11 miles northeast of Phu Loi. Binh My was sealed at 7:02 p.m. The seal was maintained until 10:15 p.m. the next day when the squadron moved 3 miles northwest to Tan Binh and sealed that village at 11:00 p.m. The seal was maintained until 12:35 p.m. the next afternoon. For the next two days the 5th Cavalry maintained its participation in Operation Lam Son 67 until 6:35 a.m. 4 March when the squadron

commenced road clearing and road movement from its field position to Lai Khe on Highway 13.

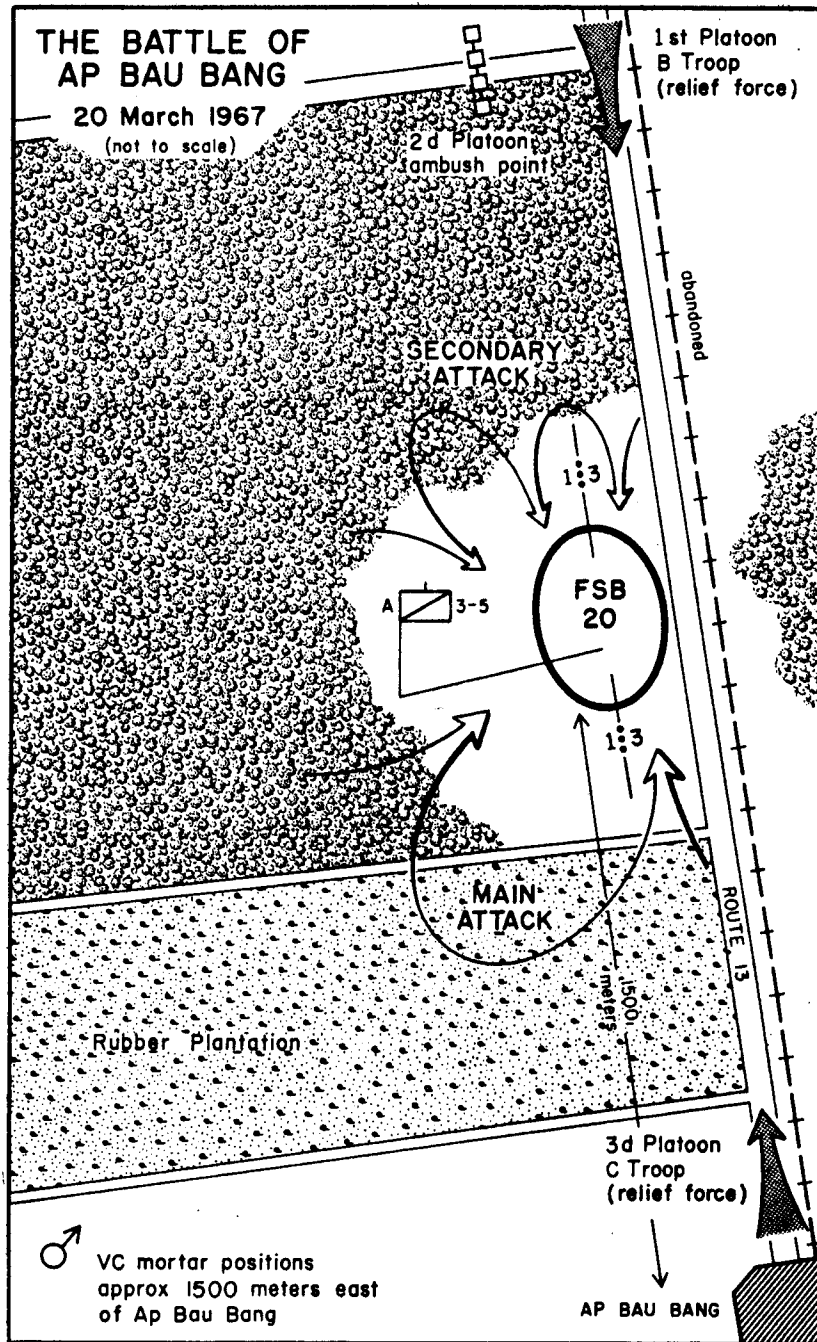
The 5th Cavalry was joining the 9th Infantry Division's, 1st Brigade, for participation in Operation Junction City, the largest combat operation to date in the Vietnam War. The 1st Brigade had just completed Operation Pittsburg in the southern portion of War Zone D and was going to participate in Junction City under the operational control of the 1st Infantry Division. The brigade joining the operation already in progress was given the mission of securing Highway 13 between Lai Khe and Quan Loi; for escorting convoys along it; and for defending assigned fire bases in its operational area. The brigade would also conduct search and destroy operations adjacent to the highway. While escorting as many as 200 vehicles a day through the 35 mile run the brigade kept enemy firing upon convoys to a very few incidents.

Junction City was a massive II Field Force, Vietnam, operation launched on 22 February in War Zone C and would ultimately include elements of the 1st, 4th, 9th, and 25th Infantry Divisions, plus the 196th Light Infantry Brigade, 11th Armored Cavalry, and the 173d Airborne Brigade. In addition to four battalions of South Vietnamese Army [ARVN] who also participated. On D-day the 173d Airborne Brigade conducted the first United States parachute assault since the Korean War when brigade elements jumped north of Katum in Tay Ninh Province. 1st Brigade forces consisted of the 5th Cavalry; 2d Battalion, 47th Infantry [M]; and 4th Battalion, 39th Infantry.

For Operation Junction City the 5th Cavalry was assigned three missions: clear and secure Highway 13 from Lai Khe to Cau Xe Su's Suoi Than; secure the artillery base near Ap Bau Bang; and prepare for commitment as a reaction force in the 1st Brigade's area of operation. On the night of 19-20 March 1967 with less than two months in Vietnam A Troop defending Fire Support Base 14<sup>11</sup>, 1,500 meters north of Ap Bau Bang, in a six hour night battle gave the 9th Infantry Division its first major victory of the Vietnam War and A Troop a Presidential Unit Citation.

This battle known as the battle of Ap Bau Bang was chronicled in the 1974 Department of the Army, Vietnam Studies entitled: Cedar Falls-Junction City-A Turning Point, by Lieutenant General Bernard William Rogers. General Rogers was the assistant division commander of the 1st Infantry Division at the time of the battle. And its General Rogers' account of the battle that follows.

At 1150 on 19 March, A Troop, 3d Squadron, 5th Cavalry Regiment, commanded by Captain Raoul H. Alcalá, deployed within the perimeter of Fire Support Base



20. A unit of the 1st Brigade, 9th Infantry, attached to the 1st Infantry Division, the 129-man company had six tanks, twenty M113 armored personnel carriers, and three 4.2-inch mortar carriers. The unit formed into a circular [wagon train] perimeter defense with the mission of securing the base for B Battery [105mm.] of the 7th Battalion, 9th Artillery, commanded by Captain Duane W. Marion.

Fire Support Base 20 was located in relatively flat country 1,500 meters north of Ap Bau Bang immediately west of QL 13. To the south of the position was a rubber plantation, while wooded areas were prominent to the north and west. An abandoned railroad track ran parallel to and thirty meters east of the highway.

Intelligence sources had indicated that the Ap Bau Bang area was infested with local force guerrillas; they had also pointed out a well-used trail to the north which ran east and west. Captain Alcalá sent his 2d Platoon commanded by First Lieutenant Harlan E. Short to establish an ambush along the trail at a point 1,500 meters north of the fire support base and approximately 350 meters west of Route 13. The ambush was to be in position by 1800. The perimeter was manned on the west by the 1st Platoon, commanded by First Lieutenant Roger A. Festa; occupying the eastern portion was the 3d Platoon under Second Lieutenant Hiram M. Wolfe, IV.

At 2250 that night a Viet Cong probe signaled the start of the second battle of Ap Bau Bang. The probe was spearheaded by a herd of fifteen belled cattle being driven across Route 13 at a point 150 meters northeast of the perimeter. Ten minutes later the Viet Cong started raking the northeast section of the perimeter with a wheel-mounted .50-caliber machine gun located on the railroad track embankment. Specialist Four Eugene W. Stevens, commanding one of the tanks, trained his searchlight on the Viet Cong position and returned the fire with all his weapons. The fire fight was joined by the weapons of three of the APC's and continued for about three minutes. The enemy gun sprayed the perimeter with only five separate bursts of fire before it was silenced by the response of A Troop.

During the lull that followed, the units, including the 2d Platoon still manning the ambush site, assumed a state of increased readiness. Reconnaissance by fire was conducted by Lieutenant Wolfe's tank along the wood line to the east beyond the railroad. At 2310 Captain Alcalá reported: "Firing has ceased now, we are using infra-red to scan the area for movement...."

At 0030, 20 March 1967, the Viet Cong attack resumed as Fire Support Base

20 was hit with mortar rounds, rifle grenades, rockets, and recoilles rifle fire. The beginning of the main phase of the batttle had been signaled. Lieutenant Festa's track was hit, wounding his sergeant. It was apparent that the Viet Cong were well zeroed in. The fire was now coming from the west. Captain Alcala requested artillery support from the battalion he was securing and from Lai Khe.

Brigadier General James F. Hollingsworth, assistant division commander of the 1st Infantry Division, later described this phase of the battle:

Their mortar positions were located from 1500 to 2000 meters west of Ap Bau Bang in and around an old village that had been destroyed. The mortar positions were located by radar from the Lai Khe artillery base.... I understood the counter mortar radar played an important role in picking them up. However, the most accurate way of picking up the mortars during this battle was by two airborne artillery observers who could see the flashes from the mortars. I think that a combination of both brought about their location

As the intensity of the fire increased, another M-113 was hit. Then another APC received direct hits in the front and left side from recoilless rifle rounds; three of the crew were wounded and the vehicle was set afire. Two of the 3d Platoon tanks were hit: however, both remained in the battle.

Throughout the mortar and antitank bombardment, Captain Alcala maintained radio contact with his squadron commander, Lieutenant Colonel Sidney S. Haszard, located to the south.

Within twenty minutes of the beginning of the mortar attack the Viet Cong ground assault began with the main attack coming from the south and southwest and with a secondary attack from the north. The massed troops of the 273d Viet Cong Regiment emerged from the rubber trees and moved steadily forward under a base of fire. The enemy soldiers were wearing black pajamas or dark colored fatigues and sandals, and carrying individual weapons. The attack was co-ordinated with the mortar fire, and not until the enemy came out in the open was its magnitude apparent.

Captain Alcala advised his headquarters at 0050 that he could handle the attack, but asked that a ready reaction force be set up incase it was needed. Colonel Haszard acknowledged the message and alerted the 1st Platoon of B Troop to the north of Ap Bau Bang and the 3d Platoon of C Troop to the south to move to Fire Support Base 20. He gave Captain Alcala permission to alert his 2d at the ambush site to prepare for movement back into the perimeter. Colonel

Haszard noted the growing size of the enemy offensive and decided to move with his command element to A Troop's position.

In the 3d Platoon sector on the eastern side of the perimeter lieutenant Wolfe detected Viet Cong movement and requested night illumination from a 4.2-inch mortar. As the light from the flare swung across the area, it was possible to see Viet Cong troops crossing the highway from east to west. The platoon commenced firing and the enemy movement stopped. Staff Sergeant George Hua reported, "I got two hits on top of my turret from 60mm mortar rounds, 2 rounds struck the gun shield below the gun tube....Another round hit the main gun's blast deflector, so we opened fire with everything we could lay our hands on."

At 0100 Captain Alcala was advised that a flareship-Spooky 742-armed with miniguns, and a light fire team of helicopter gunships were on the way.

The enemy troops on the southwest portion of the perimeter were starting to swarm over some of the APC's. A voice from Track 10 came to Staff Sergeant Dorren in Track 17: "They are swarming all over my track. Dust me with canister." Sergeant Dorren hesitated, concerned about the effects of canister on the crew. Once again came the plea, "My people are down, shoot!" Several rounds of canister wiped out the enemy in the area of the overrun track. Staff Sergeant Ramos-Rosario also called for a dusting by canister. Sergeant Dorren fired several rounds in front of Track 11, eliminating the Viet Cong. Another call for help came from Track 10. Sergeant Dorren fired again and then watched the track burst into a ball of fire as enemy mortar rounds scored direct hits. The wounded crew escaped, but Private First Class Steve Lopez died later of his wounds.

Two more armored personnel carriers were hit, one of them Lieutenant Wolfe's track. Because the Viet Cong were in so close to his line of APC's, Wolfe had to pull back about twenty-five or thirty meters and realign the platoon, completing the move by 0115. Lieutenant Wolfe's track was hit a second time by an RPG2 rocket. The entire crew was wounded and evacuated to the medical clearing tent in the center of the perimeter.

The troop's 2d Platoon came charging down Route 13 from its ambush site, the men firing intermittently as they came. The troopers, after arriving at the fire support base, manned the gaps in the hard-pressed southern half of the perimeter. As they took their positions, they were hit with recoilless rifle fire and grenades.

The elements of B and C Troops alerted earlier received the order to move and immediately raced to join the battle. The 3d Platoon of C Troop, attacking

up Route 13 from its troop's position five kilometers to the south, ran through a barrage of enemy fire before reaching the perimeter at 0127. At the direction of Captain Alcalá, the platoon swept 1,500 meters south of the defenders along the rubber-grove tree line. Firing continually during their sweep, the cavalymen swung west, then north, then doubled back and entered the perimeter from the southeast. The vehicles pulled into position between A Troop's vehicles on the eastern portion of the perimeter defense.

At this same time the 1st Platoon of B Troop was tearing down Route 13 from its position eight kilometers north. After blasting through a hastily built ambush just north of the perimeter, the troopers moved around to the south, firing as they went. Moving into the perimeter, the platoon took up positions between A Troop's vehicles on the western half of the defensive ring.

The perimeter now contained the artillery battery, all of A Troop, and the two relief platoons—a large quantity of armor for the size of the perimeter. Captain Alcalá expanded the perimeter by forty meters with a counter attack at 0220.

Two of the tracks hit previously continued to burn throughout the engagement. Lieutenant Festa moved forward with two APC's to evacuate the wounded lying nearby. Several Viet Cong attempting to remove the .50-caliber machine gun from one of the burning tracks were killed, as were others attacking the foxholes containing the wounded. Lieutenant Festa and Specialist Four Abelardo Penedo, while under intense fire, dismounted and loaded the wounded into Festa's personnel carrier.

Meanwhile Colonel Haszard, in an APC followed by another M-113 bearing his command group, moved up Route 13 to the perimeter. Just short of the perimeter, Haszard's track was hit and disabled. Captain Alcalá sent a tank out of the perimeter to assist the disabled track. Colonel Haszard dismounted in heavy small arms fire and, warding off the Viet Cong, attached the towline. The command track, with its valuable communications equipment, was pulled into the perimeter.

At 0300 another attack was developing to the south of the perimeter. It appeared to Captain Alcalá that this attack was an attempt by the Viet Cong to recover bodies. Behind a line of skirmishers, unarmed troops advanced carrying ropes and wires with hooks attached to recover the bodies left on the battlefield. The attacking force was stopped within fifteen meters of the perimeter.

During this attack, and for the next four hours, miniguns and air strikes pounded the Viet Cong from above. An Air Force flareship kept the battle area continually lighted. Initially the artillery covered the northwest, west, and

southwest sides of the perimeter while aircraft attacked on a north-south axis east of Route 13. Later a switch was made and the aircraft attack runs were made from east to west on the south and southwest sides of the perimeter.

During the battle, resupply and "Dust-off" [medical evacuation] missions continued under the direction of Lieutenant Colonel Paul F. Gorman, G-3 of the 1st Infantry Division. Because of the nature of the battle and the preponderance of automatic weapons on armored vehicles, two and in some cases three basic loads of .50-caliber and 7.62-mm. ammunition were expended during the fight. At 0330 the enemy fire slackened; resupply of the units and evacuation of the wounded was completed during the next hour and fifteen minutes while the artillery and air strikes continued. Twenty-six of the sixty-three men wounded were evacuated; many of the slightly wounded chose to stay in their positions and man their weapons.

By 0450 it was noted under the illumination of flares and tank searchlights that the enemy was massing for an attack on the south and southeast sides of the perimeter. The Viet Cong started their attack at 0500; the artillery shifted its fire to the west, and aircraft dropped cluster bomb units followed by napalm and 500-pound bombs on the attackers. The final assault of the Viet Cong was blunted and the noises of battle subsided. At 0700 the final air strike and artillery rounds were placed on the withdrawing enemy.

Colonel Hazzard delivered the following message to the men who had taken part in the battle:

I am extremely proud of every man in this unit for [his] actions last night. However, there are still many VC in the area. Therefore, you must take all precautions. I want you to have reaction forces ready for all elements in the way that you did today....Sweep operations tomorrow must be done thoroughly. Insure that perimeters tonight are the best possible.

The battle of Ap Bau Bang II [Ap Bau Bang was also the site of the first major action in which the 1st Infantry Division participated on 12 November 1966] resulted in 227 [known] enemy dead, 3 prisoners taken, and the capture of much enemy equipment and weapons. Blood trails stood as mute evidence of the many bodies hauled away by the Viet Cong. Although more enemy than usual are killed by small arms when attacks are made on cavalry and armored units, the majority of enemy deaths in this battle, as in others, resulted from artillery and air strikes. In this instance 29 air strikes delivered 29 tons of ordnance, and the artillery fired nearly 3,000 rounds. U.S. losses were 3 men killed and 63 wounded. Enemy prisoners identified the attackers as the 2d and 3d Battalions.



of the 273d Regiment of the 9th Viet Cong Division. Intelligence experts believed the whole regiment participated.

As a result of the battle, General Hay [commanding general, 1st Infantry Division] wrote a letter to the 9th Division commander. Printed in Vietnamese in leaflet form, it was dropped into the enemy area. Translated, the text of the letter read:

This is to advise you that during the battle of Ap Bau Bang on 20 March the Regimental Commander of Q763 [273d Regiment] and his battalion commanders disgraced themselves by performing in an unsoldierly manner.

During this battle with elements of this Division and attached units your officers failed to accomplish their mission and left the battlefield covered with dead and wounded from their units.

We have buried your dead and taken care of your wounded from this battle. The letter bore the signature of General J.H. Hay.

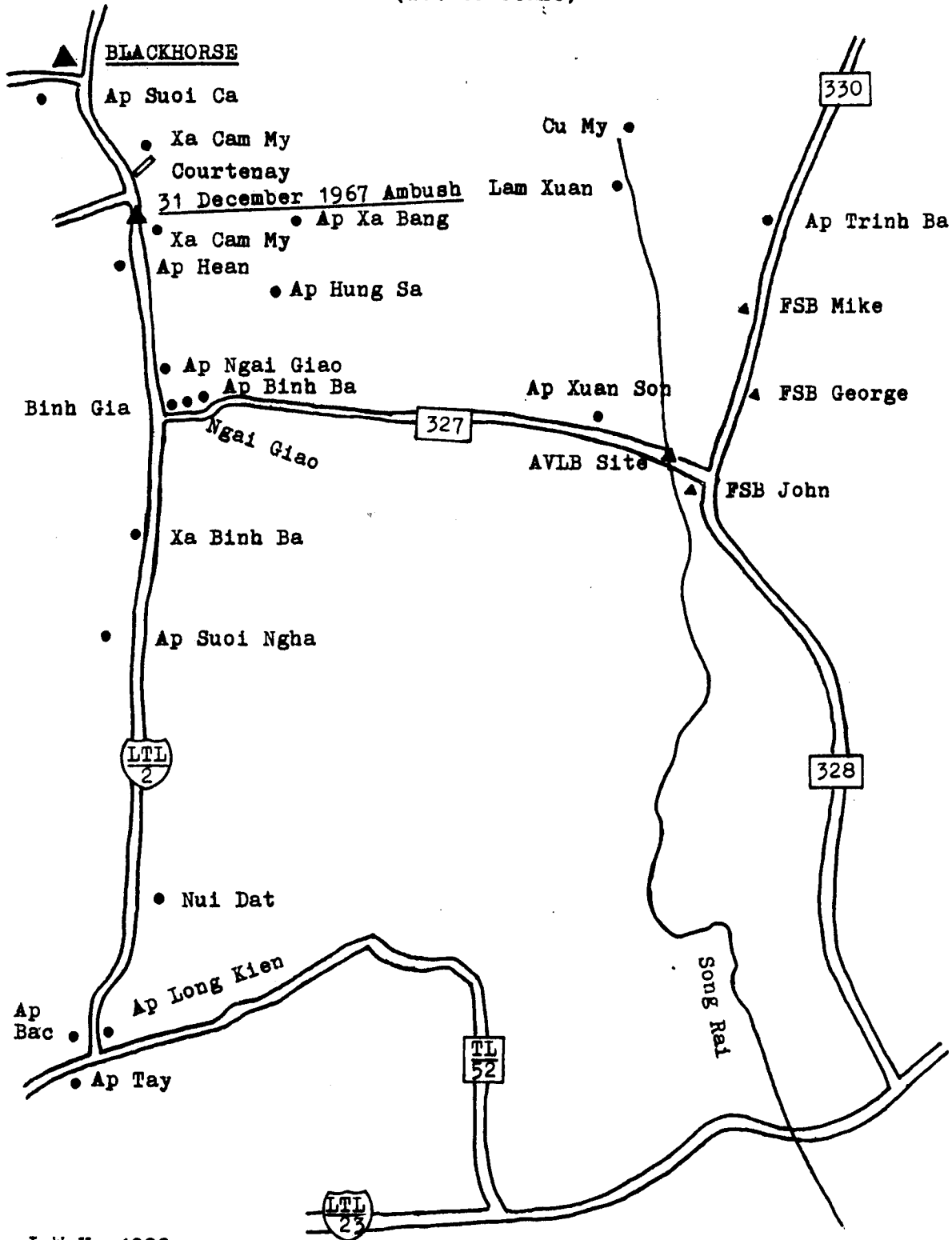
Following its participation in Operation Junction City II on 29 March the 1st Brigade moved southeastward and launched Operation Portsea II in the jungles of central Phuoc Tuy Province on 3 April. The operation was being mounted against the 5th Viet Cong Division in an effort to disrupt the division's supply system and to extend government control over the targeted area. Efforts would be made to destroy Viet Cong forces along Route 327 from Binh Gia to Xuyen Moc 13 miles to the southeast. In addition to the 9th Infantry Division forces a squadron from the 11th Cavalry and the 1st Australian Task Force would be participating in the operation.

The 1st Australian Task Force consisted of Australian and New Zealand troops, had been operating in Phuoc Tuy Province since April 1966 and was stationed at Nui Dat on Route 2 22 miles north of Vung Tau. The 11th Cavalry squadron was stationed at the regimental base camp Blackhorse [Long Giao] on Route 2 in adjoining Long Khanh Province, 8 miles south of Xuan Loc the provincial capital. Route 2 a dirt road extended 26 miles between its junction with Highway 1 at Tan Phong in Long Khanh Province and its junction with Route 52 at Ap Tay in Phuoc Tuy Province. Highway 1 and Route 2 were the 1st Brigade's land route to the operational area. Brigade forces consisted of the 5th Cavalry; 2d Battalion, 39th Infantry; and the 2d Battalion, 47th Infantry [M].

During the twelve days the operation was undertaken the Viet Cong avoided major contact with the participating forces. In contacts made during the

SOUTHEASTERN III CORPS

(not to scale)



J.W.H.-1992

operation 44 Viet Cong were killed and 6 captured. Also 77 weapons, 219,163 rounds of ammunition, and 18 tons of rice were captured. With the end of Operation Portsea II the 1st Brigade returned westward and rejoined Junction City while the 5th Cavalry moved to Blackhorse and assumed responsibility for the security of the 11th Cavalry's base camp on 22 April.

At Blackhorse the 11th Cavalry's 2d Squadron left the base camp on the 22d to join Task Force Oregon in I Corps. The regiment having earlier relieved the 1st Brigade of its mission along Highway 13 prior to the brigade starting Operation Portsea II was participating in Operation Junction City. At Blackhorse the 2d Squadron had been conducting Kittyhawk, a continuing operation launched in Long Khanh Province on 14 February 1967. Operation Kittyhawk was designed to secure specific lines of communications within Long Khanh Province; to secure designated installations; and to conduct joint operations with South Vietnamese forces and other Free World Military Forces.

At the conclusion of Operation Manhattan on 12 May, Headquarters, 11th Cavalry, returned to Blackhorse and resumed Operation Kittyhawk. Fifteen days later the regiment's 1st Squadron reverted back to regimental control. Earlier the 11th Cavalry had been placed under the 9th Infantry Division's operational control on 26 May and was subsequently attached to the division on 1 June.

During May D Troop supported the division's 2d Brigade for the first time in brigade operations in Dinh Tuong Province. At this time the brigade had not started its Mobile Riverine operations. They would commence on 1 June with Operation Coronado I. In May the 2d Brigade was stationed at Dong Tam and the division's 3d Brigade was stationed at Tan An in Long An Province, in southwestern III Corps, 45 miles southwest of Bearcat. Headquarters, 3d Brigade, had originally deployed to Dong Tam on 24 January 1967 with one infantry battalion and two engineer companies, to direct construction of the Dong Tam base camp and to conduct operations in Dinh Tuong Province. On 10 March the 2d Brigade replaced the 3d Brigade at Dong Tam and the latter moved to Tan An.

On 9 June the division's 1st Brigade and 3d Squadron, 11th Cavalry, launched Operation Akron south of Bearcat in Long Thanh District of Bien Hoa Province and Quan Duc District of Phuoc Tuy Province. The objective of Operation Akron was to clear Base Area 303 [Hat Dich] of Viet Cong forces and installations. Another major objective of the operation was the clearing of three trails and helicopter landing zones between Highway 15 and Route 2 to facilitate

future operations.

The 5th Cavalry was placed under the 11th Cavalry's operational control on 19 June and assisted in sweep operations south of the Courtenay Rubber Plantation off of Route 2, 5 miles south of Blackhorse. At early afternoon on the 19th A Troop engaged an unknown size Viet Cong force 2 miles east of Route 2. In response to this contact artillery, a helicopter light fire team, and air strikes were called in to support the troop. In the course of this action A Troop had 2 men wounded and one ACAV damaged. Later in the afternoon C Troop found fresh graves containing 8 Viet Cong bodies. The following day the 5th Cavalry continued its sweep operations and made the discovery of a base camp at mid-day. Air strikes were employed against the base camp. Finally, at 5:06 p.m. the 5th Cavalry reverted back to 9th Infantry Division control.

Then in response to a heavy contact the 52d ARVN Rangers were having south of the Dong Nai River, 23 miles north of Blackhorse, with two battalions from the 275th Viet Cong Main Force Regiment who had crossed the river from War Zone D, the 11th Cavalry launching Operation Quicksilver sent its 1st Squadron to reinforce the rangers. Subsequently, the 9th Infantry Division committed the 2d and 4th Battalions, 39th Infantry and A Troop plus supporting artillery to the 11th Cavalry's operational control. Quicksilver continued until 2 July. Results of the operation were 49 Viet Cong killed and a substantial amount of equipment captured.

Operation Akron ended on 29 June with a total of 94 Viet Cong killed and 4 captured plus 2 Hoi Chan. In addition, 10,935 rounds of small arms ammunition, 45 mines, 9 tons of rice, 12 sampans, 98 structures, 1,370 bunkers, and two regimental size base camps were destroyed. While Task Force Plow cleared 28 miles of trail and 1,615 acres of jungle. The engineer's cut the Firestone [11.684 miles] and Blackstone [11.187 miles] trails between Highway 15 and Route 2 and connected the two trails with the Brimstone [5.594 miles] trail.

PADDINGTON AND KITTYHAWK

Following the termination of Operation Akron the 5th Cavalry took to field again under the operational control of the 1st Brigade for participation in Operation Paddington a 9th Infantry Division operation in central Phuoc Tuy Province. For the operation Headquarters, 1st Brigade; 3d Squadron, 11th Cavalry; 1st Australian Task Force; and the 2d and 3d Battalions, Vietnamese Marine Corps would be participating. For the operation the division's forward command post would control the operation from Nui Dat. The objective of the Tri-Free World military operation was the destruction of elements of the 5th Viet Cong Division. Paddington would again take the 5th Cavalry south on Route 2 to Binh Gia on the opening day of the operation. And at mid-morning 8 July A Troop departing Blackhorse as the squadron's first march order outposted Route 2 from the base camp south to Cam My. B Troop's original order to outpost the road from Cam My to Binh Gia was cancelled and the troop was ordered to proceed onto Binh Gia and establish a fire support base near the road junction with Route 327. A Troop then extended its outposting of the road onto Binh Gia. While C Troop's column departing the base camp at noon contained the Birddogs who were escorting the squadron's tactical operations center, medical and commo tracks, elements of B Battery, 2d Battalion, 35th Artillery [155SP], and elements of the 15th Engineer Battalion. Once C Troop reached the fire support base the engineers were escorted to Nui Dat by the troop's 1st Platoon.

The next morning the operation shifted eastward as B Troop moving at 6:00 a.m. swept Route 327 for two miles and then established a blocking position for the remainder of the squadron which was moving east on Route 328. A Troop with the 3d Platoon, A Company, 15th Engineer Battalion advanced to Rung Rai where AVLB bridges were layed then proceeded east to the junction of Route 327 and 328 where it established Fire Support Base John. C Troop operating without its 2d Platoon, escorted the 15th Engineer Battalion wheel vehicles to Nui Dat and a mine damaged trailer was escorted back to Blackhorse. From the base camp a 155mm Howitzer was escorted to Fire Support Base John. And the Birddogs escorted B Battery, 2d Battalion, 35th Artillery and secured a MEDCAP. C Troop escorted the squadron's tactical operations center and vehicles from Xom Xa Nam on Route 328 3 miles north of the road junction to where Fire Support Base Mike was established. During the day D Troop provided two light observation helicopters to the squadron for command and control purposes. The first day of the operation ended with a C Troop tank hitting a mine at 6:15 p.m.

As would be the morning routine each day Route 328 between Fire Support Bases Mike and John had to be swept for mines, and on the first morning B Troop's sweep team on 10 July proceeded south until it met A Troop's 1st Platoon sweeping north from John. C Troop with B Troop's 3d Platoon attached continued to guard Mike. And D Troop provided two helicopters to the squadron for the day. At late morning B Troop with A Troop's 1st Platoon moving southeast from Mike found and destroyed four bunkers.

During the afternoon the AVLB's were extracted and A Troop's 3d Platoon which had been guarding the bridge site moved up to Mike. The engineers moved up at the same time and starting building defensive positions for four artillery batteries at the fire support base. The 2d Platoon came up a little later in the day. With all of its elements A Troop moved into the jungle southeast of Mike to RON and B Troop less its 3d Platoon moved into the jungle to the southeast to RON also.

The next morning 11 July both A and B Troop's attacked southeastward toward objectives Alpha and Bravo respectively. At 8:30 a.m. B Troop made contact and had one man wounded by recoilless rifle fire and dusted-off. At 9:35 a.m. A Troop linked up with B Troop and a subsequent change in objectives gave A Troop objective Bravo and B Troop objective Alpha. A Troop moving northeastward to where a base camp had been located from the air initially ROned at that location but later moved. While B Troop found a rice cache in a pit under a hut later in the afternoon. At 4:00 p.m. B Troop was in a base camp and in contact fifteen minutes later and receiving recoilless rifle and small arms fire. In the fighting B Troop killed 4 Viet Cong without taking any casualties.

Meanwhile the 1st Brigade Command Post and the division's 1st Battalion, 11th Artillery [105T], in addition to the 5th Cavalry's tactical operations center were at Fire Support Base Mike being guarded by C Troop reinforced with B Troop's 3d Platoon. Headquarters and Headquarters Troop helped in the security of the fire support base. During the morning C Troop's mine sweep team had conducted the daily sweep of Route 328. Then early in the afternoon the troop's 1st Platoon escorted B Battery, 2d Battalion, 35th Artillery to Fire Support Base Bill.

The next morning 12 July A Troop with its 1st Platoon still attached to B Troop was given a change in orders. Instead of returning to Mike the troop was ordered to continue its search and destroy mission to the southeast and at mid-morning the troop found a small base camp. At the same time B Troop continued to search the base camp they had found the previous afternoon. At mid-day C Company, 2d Battalion, 39th Infantry linked up with B Troop and came

under the operational control of the 5th Cavalry to assist in searching the base camp. At early afternoon A Troop's 1st Platoon was released by B Troop and returned to Mike. Finally at 5:00 p.m. B Troop and C Company started back to Mike which they reached by 10:00 p.m.. And A Troop closed on B Troop's former RON by 10:00 p.m. also.

During the day C Troop with B Troop's 3d Platoon continued to secure the fire support base. During the daily sweep of Route 328 one of C Troop's tanks hit a mine but the crew was uninjured. And a forty pound shape charge was subsequently found. At mid-day the troop was ordered to send a reinforced platoon to Fire Support Base Bill.

A Troop seized objective Alpha the following day and moved back to Route 329. And B Troop reinforced with A Troop's 1st Platoon moved back into the jungle and headed back to the base camp where it had been the previous day. It was joined there by A Troop at 2:00 p.m. and the two troops completed the destruction of the camp. During the afternoon the division's commanding general, General Eckhardt visited the base camp area. Previously he had visited with the 5th Cavalry at Mike earlier in the day. With the destruction of the base camp A Troop returned to Mike while B Troop went into a RON.

During the day C Troop with the attached 3d Platoon continued to secure Mike. The troop's 1st Platoon was still at Bill with B Battery, 2d Battalion, 35th Artillery. And C Troop's 2d Platoon remained at Binh Son where it had been since the start of Operation Paddington. During the morning the attached 3d Platoon swept Route 328 and then secured Australian surveyors working on the road.

At 8:00 p.m. Fire Support Base Mike was hit by approximately 16 rounds of Viet Cong mortar fire that lasted nearly twenty-five minutes. Though at early morning one or two figures were seen outside the perimeter at 12:30 a.m. and harrasing and interdiction fires were conducted by the forces at the fire support base at 12:30 a.m. and 5:30 a.m. And figures were seen and fired on at 1:25 a.m. and 3:45 a.m. with unknown results. During the early morning hours the Viet Cong pumped three more mortar rounds into the perimeter wounding a member of B Troop's 1st Platoon.

General Eckhardt accompanied by several officers visited the 5th Cavalry's tactical operations center during the morning. And an American soldier was killed during the morning when he stepped on a mine along Route 328. In the jungle B Troop remained at its RON repairing vehicles until early afternoon when they started back for Mike. During the morning B Troop had released A

Troop's 1st Platoon which reached Mike at 1:00 p.m. The 1st Platoon was given the mission of escorting downed vehicles south on Route 328 where they would link up with elements of the 11th Cavalry for the return road march to Blackhorse. Then just 300 meters from Mike a 1st Platoon tank struck a mine as they started their road march with the downed vehicles. During the day C Troop's 1st Platoon escorted B Battery from Fire Support Base Bill to the newly established Fire Support Base George located adjacent to Route 328 1 3/4 miles south of Mike. After B Troop's return it had sent its 1st and 3d Platoons to secure Fire Support Base George.

The next day 15 July A Troop's 2d Platoon swept the road from Mike to George while B Troop's 3d Platoon swept it from George to John. During the morning A Troop's 3d Platoon at 9:00 a.m. had started a patrol to the southeast while C Troop conducted one to the southwest also. As B Troop's 3d Platoon was returning to George the platoon was ambushed by an estimated two squads of Viet Cong at 10:40 a.m. Responding to the ambush the squadron sent B Troop's 1st Platoon and A Troop's 2d and part of its 3d Platoon to assist the ambushed 3d Platoon. The Viet Cong used recoilless rifles and small arms in their ambush. Contact was broken twenty-five minutes after the ambush had started. 3d Platoon loses were 2 killed and 2 wounded. Viet Cong loses were unknown. But because of a storm at Blackhorse the dust-off called in at 10:45 a.m. was not completed until 12:05 p.m.

During the day squadron elements prepared for their return to Blackhorse the next day. During its patrol A Troop's 3d Platoon found a platoon size base camp less than a 1/2 mile from George. While C Troop reinforced with B Troop's 2d Platoon continued to secure Mike. During the evening one or two figures were seen outside the perimeter and fired on by A Troop elements at 9:30 p.m. with unknown results.

The next morning 16 July C Troop and Headquarters and Headquarters Troop secured Fire Support Base Mike during the extraction of Headquarters, 1st Brigade and 1st Battalion, 11th Artillery from Mike. For the day D Troop provided two light observation helicopters and a light fire team to cover the squadron's move. During the day B Troop swept Route 328 north to Mike and south to George and continued to secure Fire Support Base George. And the Birddogs escorted the squadron's tactical operations center and vehicles to George from where they would move with B Troop back to Blackhorse. The squadron's route of march was to be Route 328 south to Route 23, then west to Route 2, and north to Blackhorse.

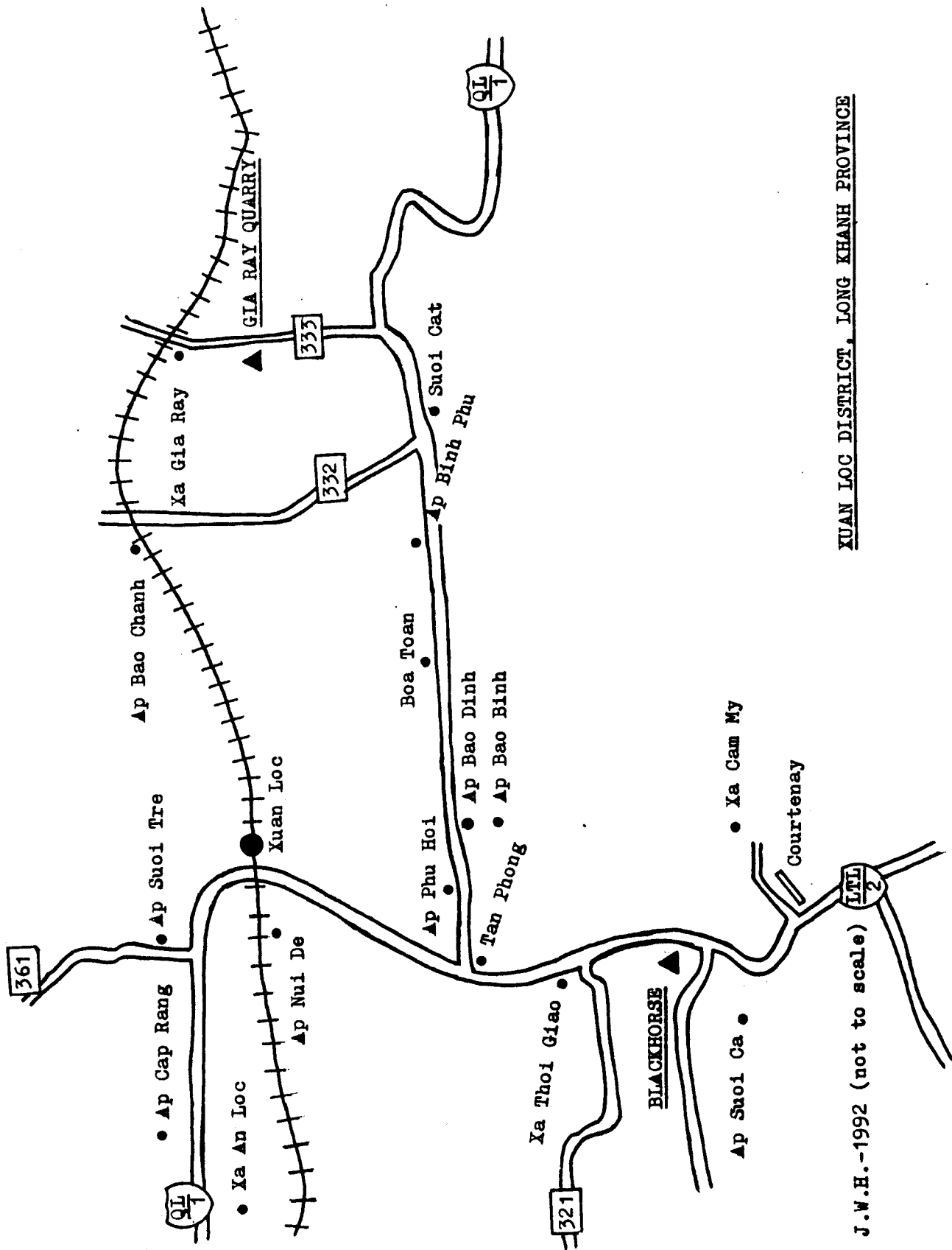


A Troop the squadron's first march unit departed at 4:28 p.m. with three 155mm Howitzers from Fire Support Base George. Earlier in the day its 1st platoon finally reached Blackhorse with the downed vehicles then the platoon had outposted Route 2 from the base camp south for 9 miles. A Troop established a fire support base adjacent to Route 23 to support the squadron in its initial movement and emplaced an AVLB bridge at a critical crossing point near by then continued onto Blackhorse. B Troop with the squadron command post elements departed at 4:32 p.m. While C Troop escorting downed vehicles and following B Battery, 2d Battalion, 35th Artillery's mission to provide support for the squadron's march to Blackhorse, started at 5:55 p.m. While the rest of the 5th Cavalry reached Blackhorse by 7:35 p.m. C Troop RONEd at Nui Dat with B Battery.

During the operation numerous mine, sniper, and ambush incidents occurred, which had been conducted by units of the 5th Viet Cong Division. Results of the operation were an estimated 40 Viet Cong contacted and 4 killed with a total of 6 possible. In addition 7 land mines, 3 tons of spoiled rice, miscellaneous clothing and backpacks, assorted weapons maintenance equipment, 300 bunkers, 50 huts, and 2 men's hats were destroyed. While the 5th Cavalry had 3 men killed and 6 wounded. Also one tank was damaged and one tank was destroyed by anti-tank mines, and one tank was damaged by recoilless rifle fire. And one APC was destroyed by unknown causes when it caught fire at the start of operation while still inside the Blackhorse base camp.

Five days after the termination of Operation Paddington the 5th Cavalry under the operational control of the 11th Cavalry assumed responsibility for Operation Kittyhawk as the regiment launched Operation Emporia, a major clearing operation along Highway 20, from its junction with Highway 1 north to the II Corps boundary, 56 miles to the north. With its assumption of Kittyhawk the squadron was not only responsible for the security of the Blackhorse base camp it was also responsible for the security of the 34th Engineer Group's rock quarry at Gia Ray, and for providing security for the logistical convoys between Blackhorse and Long Binh. As the squadron undertook Operation Kittyhawk each line troop in the squadron was assigned a specific mission. A Troop was given the mission of securing Gia Ray. B Troop the mission of escorting and securing the daily logistical convoys. And C Troop the mission of securing the Blackhorse base camp.

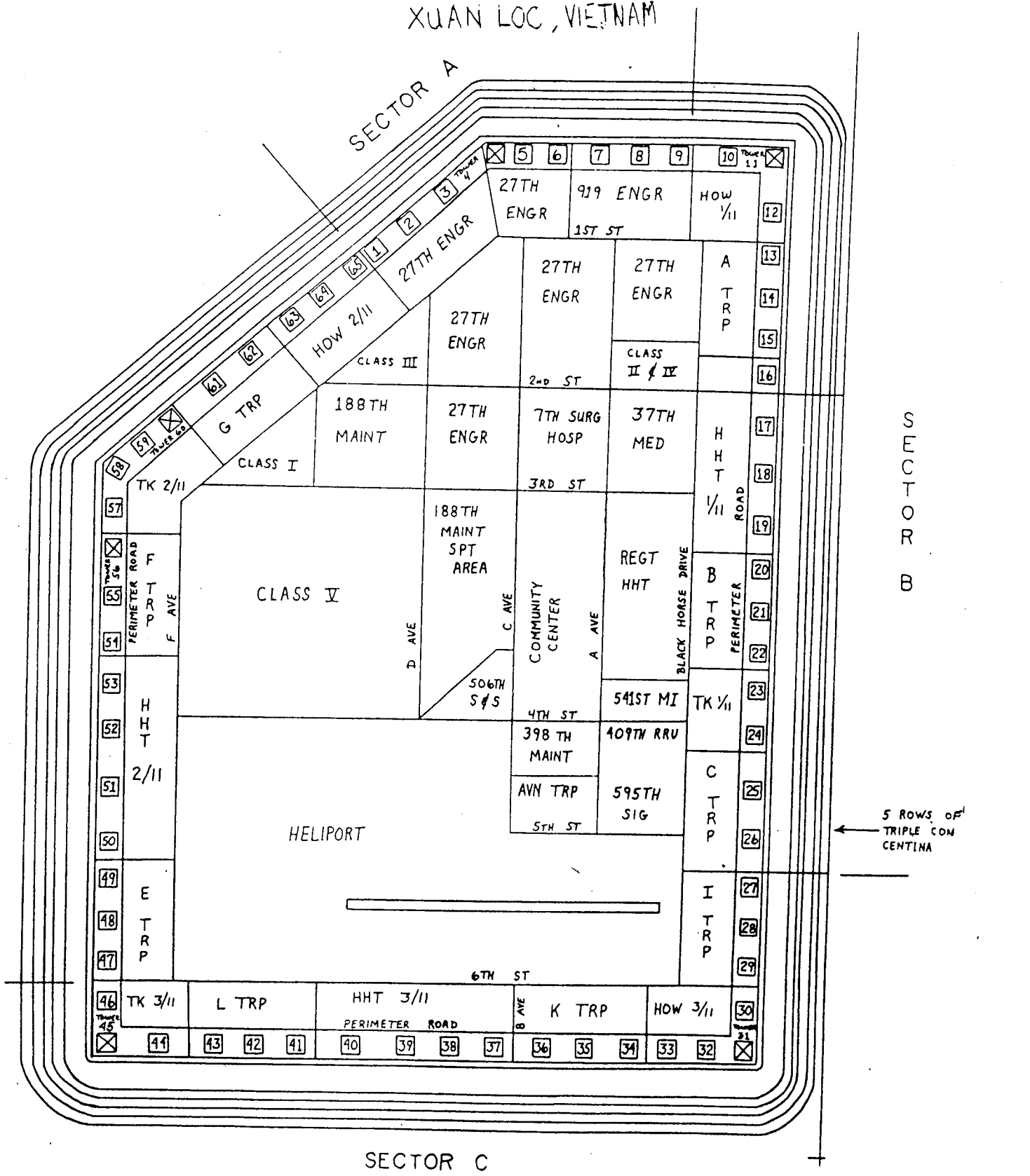
Though A Troop's line of march was north on Route 2 to Tan Phong where



XUAN LOC DISTRICT, LONG KHANH PROVINCE

J.W.H.-1992 (not to scale)

# BLACKHORSE BASECAMP XUAN LOC, VIETNAM



SECTOR B

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SECTOR C

it junctioned with Highway 1, then via the highway to Route 333 and onto the quarry, the troop reinforced with C Troop's 1st Platoon was going to establish ready reaction force positions along the highway to cover the movement of the troop and the troop it relieved. Even though it was broad daylight nothing could be taken for granted. Because in December 1966 the 11th Cavalry fought a major action on Highway 1 between Suoi Cat and the road junction with Route 333 just south of the quarry. In that fight on 2 December the regiment's 1st Squadron killed more than 100 Viet Cong. Once the relief had been made B Troop's 3d Platoon continued onto the quarry and C Troop's 1st Platoon returned to Blackhorse.

At Blackhorse B Troop prepared to assume responsibility for the convoy escort mission. The daily supply convoys were run with one platoon actually running the convoys while the troop's two other platoons established ready reaction force positions along the highway from which to respond from should the convoy run into trouble. The ready reaction force platoons would deploy daily from Blackhorse while the platoon running the convoy would remain at Long Binh once it returned at the end of the day with the return convoy.

At the same time C Troop assumed responsibility for the security of the base camp at 12:00 p.m. by relieving all 11th Cavalry perimeter personnel appropriate. The base camp had been constructed in late 1966 for the 11th Armored Cavalry which arrived in Vietnam in September<sup>12</sup> of that year. Blackhorse was located in Long Khanh Province's, Xuan Loc District, 8 miles south of Xuan Loc, the provincial capital. In direct distance the base camp was only 17 miles southeast of Bearcat. But by road it was 49 miles. The base camp was surrounded by an earthen berm and was comprised of wood framed, wood floored tents for quarters, and wooden buildings for offices, mess halls, headquarters, etc. The base camp was spartan and reminiscent of a 19th Century American frontier fort situated in the middle of a hostile environment.

In addition to the 11th Cavalry and its attached 37th Medical Company and 919th Engineer Company the base camp was home to other Army units also. The 27th Engineer Battalion [Combat], 541st Military Intelligence Detachment, 409th Radio Research Unit, 595th Signal Company, 398th Maintenance, 188th Maintenance Battalion [Direct Support], 506th Support and Service Company were also at the base camp. In addition the 7th Surgical Hospital [Mobile Army] was stationed at the base camp. And Evans Army Airfield was large enough to accomodate Air Force C-7 Caribu transports.

The next day 21 August the 5th Cavalry started its first full day of

Operation Kittyhawk. Within Headquarters and Headquarters Troop the Birddogs, the squadron's provisional scout section was given a two fold mission that would become routine and done daily. First, at the start of the day they checked the base camp's outside perimeter from 7:13 to 8:50 a.m. And at 9:38 a.m. they left for Xuan Loc with a convoy and MEDCAP team for the provincial capital. At 12:30 p.m. they returned to Blackhorse and later in the day escorted the second daily convoys to Xuan Loc. Xuan Loc in addition to being the provincial capital and also the headquarters for the 18th ARVN Division and the United States Army's 54th Artillery Group, MACV Team 49, and Headquarters, 2d Battalion, 35th Artillery [155SP] and the location of one battery of the 1st Battalion, 83d Artillery [8"-175mm SP]. Both battalions were elements of the 54th Artillery Group

At late morning B Troop's 2d and 3d Platoons left Blackhorse and upon reaching Highway 1 proceeded west to where the 2d Platoon established a ready reaction force position at the horseshoe curve west of Xuan Loc and the 3d Platoon proceeded on west to Trang Bom where it established its position. In response to the ambush of the 3d Squadron, 11th Cavalry on Highway 20, C Troop's 1st Platoon relieved B Troop's 2d Platoon who along with the 3d Platoon had been put on stand-by for possible movement to the ambush site. But the move was not necessary. So the 2d Platoon then escorted B Battery, 1st Battalion, 84th Artillery [155SP], a 9th Infantry Division artillery unit from Long Binh to Blackhorse. During the afternoon B Troop's 1st Platoon escorted the return convoy back to Long Binh.

During the day C Troop while continuing to secure the base camp sent a dismounted patrol to the area immediately south of the base camp. And in response to the ambush on Highway 20 had sent its 1st Platoon to relieve B Troop's 2d Platoon at the horseshoe curve. Even though C Troop had the mission of securing the base camp it would conduct daily missions away from the base camp also. And at late afternoon C Troop's 2d Platoon was sent with a low-boy and wrecker to police up a burnt trailer.

While at Gia Ray A Troop continued its maintenance and improving positions in the area. During the afternoon the 2d Battalion, 43d ARVN Regiment, 18th ARVN Division, arrived at Blackhorse, and would work with the 5th Cavalry during its participation in Operation Kittyhawk.

The following day the squadron was starting to pick up the pace of the daily routines. The Birddogs conducted their routine daily missions and escorted and secured a MEDCAP team to Tran Hung Dao west of Xuan Loc. While at Gia Ray

A Troop continued with its previous day's activities. And B Troop's 2d Platoon escorted Rome plows plows to the junction of Highway 20 where they were turned over to the 11th Cavalry. The troop's 3d Platoon joined the 2d at that location and the 1st Platoon ran the daily convoys. And C Troop's 2d Platoon conducted a dismounted patrol to the north of the base camp and the ARVNs conducted one to the east of the camp.

At 11:30 a.m. the next morning Colonel Haszard turned command of the 5th Cavalry over to Lieutenant Colonel Howard R. Fuller, Jr. While out at Gia Ray A Troop's 1st Platoon and ARVN elements conducted a dismounted patrol to the east of the rock quarry where they found an old bunker complex. The patrol took sniper fire but no casualties. Meanwhile, B Troop's 2d Platoon left Blackhorse at early morning and escorted C Troop's 2d Platoon and ARVN elements 12 miles west of Xuan Loc where they conducted a sweep operation. B Troop's 3d Platoon departing the base camp picked up the 52d ARVN Rangers and escorted them to the junction of Highway 20 where they were turned over to the 3d Squadron, 11th Cavalry. Both platoons then set up their ready reaction force positions for the day and the 1st Platoon again ran the daily supply convoy.

The next day the Birddogs escorted a MEDCAP to Hung Nghia. While at Gia Ray, A Troop's 2d and 3d Platoons swept Route 333 and Highway 1 from the quarry to Suoi Cat. The 3d Platoon then established a rapid reaction force position at the road junction while the 2d Platoon conducted a sweep south of Highway 1 where it discovered twenty foxholes. Without incident B Troop conducted its convoy escort and security mission. During the morning C Troop and ARVN elements following a sweep team moved south approximately  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile to Suoi Soc. And a 1st Platoon tank was slightly damaged when it hit a mine at mid-morning. C Troop then established a blocking position while the ARVNs conducted a sweep. During their sweep the ARVNs made contact with an estimated two platoons of Viet Cong and two were killed. The following day 25 July the Birddogs escorted and secured a MEDCAP to Trang Hung Dao. While out at Gia Ray the morning road sweep was extended westward beyond Suoi Cat to just past Route 332. B Troop continued its convoy mission. And C Troop with ARVN elements conducted a search and destroy operation west of Blackhorse along Route 320 that extended west through Binh Son and onto Highway 15.

The next day the Birddogs escorted and secured a MEDCAP team back to Trang Hung Dao. At Gia Ray A Troop conducted its daily road clearing mission. After their sweep the 1st and 2d Platoons established ready reaction force positions

on Highway 1 in advance of a mid-day convoy from Blackhorse. The convoy escorted by C Troop's 2d platoon arrived at Gia Ray at 1:00 p.m. The troop's 1st Platoon had preceded the convoy and had established a blocking position at Boa Toan 3½ miles east of Tan Phong. During the 2d Platoon's road march a tank hit a mine ten minutes out of Blackhorse.

B Troop's 2d Platoon with 1/2/43 ARVN, and 3d Platoon departed the base camp at 7:00 a.m. to assume their daily road side positions. The 3d platoon established its in the vicinity of the Highway 20 junction while the 2d Platoon and ARVNs proceeded west to secure Fire Support Base 4 where C Battery, 7th Battalion, 9th Artillery [105T] was positioned. The 7th Battalion, 9th Artillery was an element of the 54th Artillery Group. The 2d Platoon would stay at the fire support base as both security and as a ready reaction force. The 1st Platoon then ran the daily convoys without incident.

The Birddogs escorted and secured a MEDCAP team the following day to Hung Nghia and conducted a route reconnaissance as well as their routine daily mission of checking the base camp's perimeter and escorting convoys to and from Xuan loc. At Gia Ray A Troop's 3d Platoon conducted the routine sweep of Route 333 and Highway 1 then established a ready reaction force position at the road junction while the 2d Platoon secured engineers working at the bridge site Cau Gia Leu west of Suoi Cat. During the day the 2d Platoon took one round of sniper fire which caused no casualties. And B Troop continued with its convoy mission. During the day C Troop along with ARVN elements moved onto Highway 1 and established a ready reaction force position at Boa Toan for the 18th ARVN Division. Subsequently C Troop established a blocking position that extended east to Ap Binh Phu.

At early evening one of C Troop's ambush patrol positions saw lights moving to the south and subsequently took them under fire. The patrol was withdrawn. Later in the night C Troop was alerted for a possible movement to assist an ARVN outpost under attack 9 miles south of the base camp. The alert was cancelled an hour later. And at Gia Ray A Troop conducted a thunder run from the quarry to the road junction.

The next day the Birddogs escorted and secured a MEDCAP team to Trung Hung Dao. While out at Gia Ray A Troop routinely swept Route 333 and Highway 1. And B Troop ran the daily convoy to and from Blackhorse. And C Troop carrying ARVN forces swept Route 2 south to Suoi Ca and then established a blocking position for the ARVNs. The 1st Platoon searched Suoi Ca then established a blocking position. Meanwhile, D Troop, less its aerial rifle platoon, went into

action for the first time in support of the Mobile Riverine Force which was operating in the Cam Son base area west of the 2d Brigade's base camp Dong Tam. Intelligence had predicted several enemy battalions in the area prior to the 2d Brigade launching its four day operation in Dinh Tuong Province IV Corps. D Troop had the reconnaissance mission of covering the eastern Cam Son and western Ban Long area of the 2d Brigade's flank. During the day D Troop elements detected a squad of the enemy in the Ban Long area and troop gunships killed five of them.

The next day the Birddogs escorted and secured a MEDCAP team back to Tran Hung Dao. For the 5th Cavalry the day would be spent changing missions. A Troop would move to Blackhorse and assume B Troop's convoy mission. B Troop would take over C Troop's base camp security mission. And C Troop would move to Gia Ray and take over A Troop's security mission there.

At Gia Ray A Troop's 1st Platoon conducted the daily road sweep while the 2d Platoon established a ready reaction force position at the road junction. When the sweep was completed the 1st Platoon relieved the 2d at the road junction who then returned to the quarry. C Troop's 1st and 3d Platoons established ready reaction force positions at Boa Toan and Ap Binh Phu. At mid-morning the 3d Platoon received two RPG rounds that missed their targets. Then at 1:50 p.m. A Troop's 3d Platoon returned to Blackhorse and assumed responsibility for the convoy back to Long Binh later in the afternoon. Relieved at Gia Ray the remainder of A Troop departed the quarry at 2:50 p.m. and was followed in by its 1st Platoon. C Troop's 1st and 3d Platoons then proceeded onto Gia Ray and joined the troop there. At early afternoon a troop element received small arms fire but there were no casualties.

Meantime while its 2d Platoon continued to secure Fire Support Base 4 B Troop's 3d Platoon had established its daily ready reaction force position in the vicinity of the Highway 20 road junction. And the morning convoy with the 1st Platoon in escort reached Blackhorse at 1:10 p.m. A Troop's 3d Platoon would run the convoy back to Long Binh.

On 30 July the Birddogs escorted and secured a MEDCAP team to Ap Nui Tung. While at Gia Ray C Troop conducted a dismounted patrol to the northwest of the quarry. And at Blackhorse A Troop's 1st and 2d Platoons moved up onto Highway 1 to establish the daily ready reaction force positions in advance of the daily convoy from Long Binh to Blackhorse and back. The 2d Platoon established its position adjacent to the Highway 20 road junction while the



1st Platoon continued onto Fire Support Base 4 and relieved B Troop's 2d Platoon there. And A Troop's 3d Platoon ran the daily convoy without incident. Meantime at mid-morning B Troop's 1st and 3d Platoons with ARVN elements moved south into Phuoc Tuy Province. The 3d Platoon established a blocking position alongside the road in the vicinity of the Courtenay airstrip. While the 1st Platoon and ARVNs who had moved to the west started sweeping back to the east.

The following day the Birddogs escorted and secured a MEDCAP team to Hung Nghia. And at Gia Ray C Troop's 1st and 3d Platoons following the morning road sweep outposted the road for an ARVN convoy. While A Troop's 2d Platoon departed Blackhorse and established its daily position near the Highway 20 road junction. After the morning convoy to Blackhorse had passed the 1st Platoon escorted C Battery from Fire Support Base 4 to Long Binh then returned and established its ready reaction force position at the site. During the movement to Long Binh they had taken sniper fire. Meantime B Troop conducted a reconnaissance to the east of Blackhorse then southward to Cam My.

The following day 1 August the Birddogs escorted and secured a MEDCAP team to Thoi Giao. While at Gia Ray C Troop's 1st and 3d Platoons completed the daily road sweep to Cau Gia Leu where the 1st Platoon established a ready reaction force position while the 2d Platoon continued onto Tan Phong to pick up a platoon vehicle at the road junction that the Birddogs had escorted there. While A Troop continued with its daily convoy mission. And B Troop's 1st and 3d Platoons with two ARVN platoons conducted a route reconnaissance to Cam Tam then followed Routes 321 and 25 to Xa Dau Giay located on Highway 1.

On 2 August the Birddogs escorted and secured a MEDCAP team to Suoi Tre. At Gia Ray C Troop in addition to its daily road sweep ran a dismounted patrol to the south of the quarry. And A Troop continued with its convoy mission. And when its 1st Platoon returned to the base camp that evening it escorted some 11th Cavalry vehicles from the Highway 20 road junction on to the base camp. Meanwhile at mid-morning B Troop's 1st Platoon swept Route 2 north to Xa Thoi Giao. The platoon was followed by engineers who would repair mine damage to the road. Earlier in the morning a low boy being escorted by a 919th Engineer Company tank hit a mine 1½ miles north of the base camp and the tank had taken small arms fire. In the mine incident two men had been wounded. And during the day the ARVNs had conducted two reconnaissance patrols.

The following day the Birddogs escorted and secured a MEDCAP to Cam My.

While at Gia Ray C Troop conducted its routine road sweep. And then after the perimeter at the quarry was fired on the troop sent a patrol to the northwest to investigate. And A Troop ran its daily convoys without incident. And when its 1st Platoon returned to Blackhorse that evening it escorted seven 86th Engineer Battalion [Combat] vehicles with it from the Highway 20 road junction. During the night B Troop's 2d Platoon had conducted an all night patrol of Route 2 and Highway 1 between Blackhorse and Xuan Loc, and made runs at 1:45 a.m. and 4:15 a.m.

During the morning B Troop's 1st and 3d Platoons with ARVN elements conducted a reconnaissance 9 miles south of the base camp. In one Viet Cong complex 16 bunkers, 4 mortar positions, and 2 machine gun positions were destroyed. And a second complex was destroyed as well. At 6:45 p.m. B Troop's 3d Platoon was sent to secure a downed 11th Cavalry helicopter 5 miles northwest of Xuan Loc. And subsequently the Birddogs escorted a Headquarters Troop VTR to the 3d Platoon's location to assist in the evacuation of a tank then returned to Blackhorse. The 3d Platoon then RONed with the downed helicopter.

The following day 4 August the Birddogs escorted and secured a MEDCAP to Cap Rung. At Gia Ray C Troop's 1st Platoon conducted the daily road sweep then outposted the road. The troop was relieved by the 1st Squadron, 11th Cavalry at 11:00 a.m. then road marched back to Blackhorse and stood down for maintenance and future missions.

A Troop's 1st and 2d Platoons left the base camp and established their daily ready reaction force positions as the 3d Platoon ran the morning convoy to Blackhorse. Both the 1st and 2d platoons were placed under the operational control of the 11th Cavalry at 12:00 p.m. as the 1st Squadron relieved A Troop of its convoy mission. The return convoy to Long Binh would be run by the 1st Squadron. And at early evening the 1st and 2d Platoons returned to Blackhorse and stood down.

B Troop continued to secure the base camp until relieved at 12:00 p.m. by the 1st Squadron. The troop's 3d Platoon secured the downed helicopter until it was evacuated at mid-morning. And the troop's 1st Platoon with one platoon of ARVNs and elements of the 27th Engineers conducted a reconnaissance of Route 2 south to the Courtenay airstrip. The troop also stood down as its missions were completed. The next day the 5th Cavalry continued its stand down. But at 7:50 a.m. B Troop's 1st Platoon departed the base camp and moved south into AO Mustang where the platoon secured landing zones for

reconnaissance by unit commanders along Route 2 south of the Courtenay Rubber Plantation.

The 5th Cavalry moved south on Route 2 the next day 6 August into Phuoc Tuy Province and AO Mustang. A Troop moving as the first march unit departed the base camp escorting the other squadron elements and ARVN quartering parties. The Birddogs carrying the 11th Cavalry LRRP's moved with A Troop also. A Troop established a troop perimeter 9 miles south of Blackhorse and secured the landing zone for the ARVNs on the west side of the road. B Troop escorting the squadron's tactical operations center and one platoon of the 919th Engineers established a fire support base and squadron command post approximately 2 miles northwest of A Troop's position. While C Troop marching as the third and final march order escorted A Battery, 7th Battalion, 9th Artillery [105T] and the squadron trains to the fire support base then moved and established a perimeter 3/4 of a mile to the north. All 5th Cavalry elements were in the field by late morning.

During the afternoon both A and C Troop's sent platoons out on reconnaissance missions. A Troop's 2d Platoon conducted its reconnaissance a mile west of the fire support base. And C Troop's 3d Platoon conducted its to the northwest and investigated a base camp area inside the Courtenay Rubber Plantation. B Troop's 3d Platoon moved onto Route 2 and established a ready reaction force position on the road as the troop's 1st Platoon escorted a convoy to Blackhorse and back. And during the day the ARVNs were airlifted into the field.

The following day the Birddogs linking up with the 11th Cavalry LRRP's on the southern edge of the rubber plantation during the afternoon then it secured two landing zones before returning to the fire support base. During the afternoon Assistant Division Commander, Brigadier General Morgan G. Roseborough visited with the 5th Cavalry at the fire support base.

At early morning A Troop commenced a reconnaissance mission and the troop's 2d Platoon found 4 huts with bunkers and 5 graves-two bodies about a month old. At mid-day the 1st Platoon heard hand generated transmissions in a foreign language but were unsuccessful in locating its origin. Then in early afternoon the troop's 3d Platoon found 100 pounds of food. During the day B Troop's 3d Platoon ran two convoys to Blackhorse and back while the 1st Platoon occupied a ready reaction force position near the Courtenay airstrip. At mid-afternoon B Troop's 2d Platoon went under C Troop's operational control for several hours. During the morning C Troop's 3d Platoon found

reconnaissance by unit commanders along Route 2 south of the Courtenay Rubber Plantation.

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800 pounds of rice less than a mile from the fire support base and later found a 55 gallon drum filled with rice. At late morning the troop's 2d Platoon found what appeared to be a Viet Cong rest area and the 1st Platoon had contact with an estimated 7 Viet Cong in fortified positions a mile east of Route 2 with unknown results. And at mid-afternoon the 2d Platoon received light fire in a base area 7/10 of a mile northwest of the fire support base. B Troop's 2d Platoon coming under C Troop's operational control set up a blocking position. At early evening a patrol received enemy fire and troop elements moved against it with unknown results. During the day ARVN forces conducted a reconnaissance mission and found 2 bunkers about a mile west of their position and a little later received enemy small arms fire and observed 2 Viet Cong moving south.

The following day 8 August the Viet Cong had made their presence felt in the early morning hours when they first fired on a B Troop ambush patrol position causing no casualties and next fired two rounds of mortar fire and employed a claymore and small arms against ARVN forces that resulted in one casualty. During the morning both A and C Troop with two ARVN platoons each conducted search and destroy operations in designated areas then returned. A Troop then conducted reconaissance patrols around the troop's perimeter. During the afternoon C Troop's 2d and 3d Platoons returned to the base camp the 2d Platoon had found the previous day. While the 1st Platoon conducted a reconnaissance farther to the northwest. During the day B Troop ran the daily convoys between the fire support base and Blackhorse. And the troop sent its 3d Platoon to secure engineers improving a regional force outpost

The following day the 5th Cavalry moving its operations away from the road sent its three line platoons with ARVN forces to the west into the area the 11th Cavalry had operated in in June during Operation Akron. The squadron's westward movement was a three axis advance. The squadron's tactical operations center, A Battery, 7th Battalion, 9th Artillery, and 919th Engineers all remained at the fire support base secured by A Troop's 1st Platoon, B Troop's 2d Platoon, and one company of ARVNs. With three light observation helicopters D Troop was participating in the operation. During the morning the division's Commanding General, Major General George G. O'Connor<sup>13</sup> and an aide visited the squadron at mid-morning.

A Troop, less its 1st Platoon, with one company of ARVNs departed its position at 8:10 a.m. and advanced west along axis White heading for objective Cat 4½ miles to the west of Route 2. B Troop departing at 7:33 a.m. advanced

west on axis Blue for objective Dog 5 miles west of the road. A Troop dropped the ARVNs off and they continued their movement along the northern portion of axis White and found a base camp during their movement. And C Troop departing at 7:15 a.m. advanced on axis Red for objective Rat  $5\frac{1}{2}$  miles to the west of the road. C Troop too found a base camp but their's was a fairly old one. During the night the ARVNs closed for the night with A Troop's 2d Platoon.

During the day one of D Troop's helicopters was hit by small arms fire and forced to land at the fire support base. The helicopter was later flown on to Bearcat. Also, B Troop's 2d Platoon ran two convoys to Blackhorse and back during the day.

The next day 10 August A Troop continuing its advance seized objective Cat by mid-morning. While B Troop continued its mission in objective Dog area. And C Troop continued to secure blocking position in vicinity of objective Rat. During the day the troop conducted a composite dismounted patrol to the southeast. While the ARVNs secured the blocking position near objective Cat.

Back at the fire support base A Troop's 1st Platoon conducted an afternoon reconnaissance to the vicinity of Ap Hean and found a suitcase with black pajamas and a notebook. Later the platoon discovered a tunnel with overhead cover. And B Troop's 2d Platoon ran two convoys to Blackhorse. While the Birdgogs escorted a tank from A Troop to the fire support base. And D Troop provided two light observation helicopters for command and control purposes for the day.

The following day the squadron command post moved  $2\frac{3}{4}$  miles to the north and established a new fire support base at that location. D Troop again provided two light helicopters for command and control purposes to the squadron. A Troop conducted a dismounted patrol during the morning and found an ammunition factory just north of objective Cat. Also the troop secured the landing zone for the extraction of the ARVNs. And the troop's 3d Platoon had to RON at the location it had shared with the ARVNs because of a vehicle with track trouble. A Troop then moved its command post to a new location  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles northwest of the new fire support base. B Troop conducted a dismounted patrol before moving to its new location slightly northwest of A Troop's new location. During the day C Troop was quite active. Its dismounted patrol reported automatic weapons fire then spotted 9 Viet Cong, and followed a blood trail with negative results. And its 1st Platoon fired at an unknown number of Viet Cong. By mid-afternoon C Troop completed filling a tunnel with CS gas

then moved to a new position slightly southwest of A Troop's new position. And the ARVNs were airlifted to the new fire support base where they provided security for the base.

The following day both A and C Troop's each with two platoons of ARVNs conducted search and destroy operations. While D Troop provided three helicopters for command and control purposes. And A Troop responding to a report that a 1st Australian Task Force forward air observer had been fired at near Ap Hean searched the suspected area and found some expended brass. During the afternoon A Troop spotted a group of Viet Cong carrying supplies and gave chase. The Viet Cong discarded their supplies and the troop captured 1 POW who claimed to be an ARVN who had been taken prisoner by the Viet Cong in 1966. The POW stated a Viet Cong company that was later identified as one company of the D445 Battalion had been operating in the vicinity of Ap Binh Gia. The area was checked with negative results. And the POW was turned over to the 541st Military Intelligence Detachment at Blackhorse.

In addition to its search and destroy mission C Troop later in the day prepared to provide a rapid reaction force to the Xa Bang regional force outpost. Later the troop relieved B Troop of security for the fire support base. And the ARVNs in addition to working with A and C Troops also found 6 United States grenades and a chicom claymore near its command post.

The following day 13 August A Troop conducted a search and destroy mission along a trail to the east with no significant results. While B Troop in conjunction with two companies of ARVNs, National Police, and an IPW team conducted a cordon and search of Cam My, 3 miles south of the Courtenay airstrip Route 2. The village was sealed by 3:59 a.m. and the search began at full light. And C Troop provided escort and security for convoys traveling between Blackhorse and the fire support base. During the day squadron medics conducted MEDCAPs at both Cam My and Xa Bang. And the ARVNs conducted local patrolling from their base.

D Troop performed visual reconnaissance of IP#2 and surrounding area of Ap Hean [conducted two Eagle Flights, one in the vicinity of Hung Sa and the other in the vicinity of Suoi Ca]. At mid-morning the troop received automatic weapons fire just outside of Hung Sa and the Aero Rifle Platoon was inserted and swept the area with no significant results. Following their extraction the troop received machine gun fire southeast of Hung Sa and in response 63 rounds of artillery was fired into the area. And at early afternoon the aerial rifles were inserted near Suoi Ca for a reconnaissance of the

area. One Viet Cong was observed fleeing the area and an M79 was fired at him, with negative results. But the Aero Rifle Platoon leader was slightly wounded due to the detonation of an M79 round fired at the enemy.

The next day 14 August the squadron conducted a MEDCAP in Cam My adjacent to the Courtenary airstrip. And the Birddogs found and destroyed 5 tunnels with rooms and 6 bunkers close to Route 2. All were old. During the day A Troop with two platoons of ARVNs moved to the west for the day and discovered an old worn trail and a well used trail that an estimated company had traveled over approximately twelve hour before. Further search of the area was conducted with negative results. And B Troop with two platoons of ARVNs had also been sent to the west and found a trail that had been used within the past twenty-four hours. D Troop provided two light observation helicopters for command and control purposes. And a light scout section performed visual reconnaissance throughout AO Mustang and covered the movements of A and B Troops with negative enemy contact. And C Troop in addition to running convoys back to Blackhorse was also prepared to provide rapid reaction force for the Xa Bang regional force outpost if needed.

The next day the 5th Cavalry terminated its participation in Operation Kittyhawk and conducted a tactical road march back to Blackhorse. During the morning B Troop acting as advance guard outposted Route 2 from the fire support base to the Courtenay airstrip. And D Troop performed visual reconnaissance of the march route and provided cover utilizing aero scouts for advance, rear, and flank reconnaissance during the road march and had one light fire team on strip alert for the duration of the road march. In addition the troop also provided one light observation helicopter for command and control purposes.

C Troop with the squadron's command group in escort reached Blackhorse by 11:20 a.m. The Birddogs escorted Headquarters and Headquarters Troop wheel vehicles. As A Troop escorting the ARVNs, provided security for the artillery, and acted as rear guard reached the base camp at 11:55 a.m. And B Troop's outposting elements closed five minutes later. During the afternoon B Troop sent one platoon for escort and security of the ARVNs as they returned to Xuan Loc. Upon its return to Blackhorse on 15 August the 5th Cavalry stood down for maintenance of vehicles and equipment for its forthcoming move back to Bearcat on 17 August. During the stand down D Troop provided one light observation helicopter for Colonel Fuller's use.

Finally on 17 August the 5th Cavalry left Blackhorse with D Troop provid-



ing column cover and maintaining one light fire team on strip alert for the duration of the road march in addition to providing one light observation helicopter for command and control purposes. C Troop was the lead element with a starting point time of 12:42 p.m. and a closing time at Bearcat of 4:05 p.m. A Troop was second with a starting point time of 1:00 p.m. and a closing time of 4:15 p.m. Headquarters and Headquarters Troop was third with a starting time of 1:10 p.m. and a closing time of 5:03 p.m. And B Troop was the fourth element with a starting point time of 1:25 p.m. and a closing time of 5:07 p.m.

LATE SUMMER THROUGH EARLY WINTER OPERATIONS

Following the termination of Operation Kittyhawk and its return to Bearcat found the 5th Cavalry returning to familiar ground that it had initially worked in February and March. Over the next two months the squadron would be engaged in combat operations against the ever threatening 1,650 man 274th Main Force Viet Cong Regiment in Long Thanh District and adjacent Phuoc Tuy Province while under the operational control of the division's 1st Brigade. The first operation was launched by the 1st Brigade on 22 August in response to intelligence indicating the presence of the 274th Regiment in southern Long Khanh and northern Phuoc Tuy Provinces. Brigade forces consisted of the 5th Cavalry, 2d Battalion, 47th Infantry [M], and 2d and 4th Battalions, 39th Infantry.

Operation Akron II started with a B52 strike which landed on or near the 274th's regimental command post area. Following the B52 strike were mechanized and airmobile assaults into the area of operation. As the operations progressed only light contact was made with enemy forces until the termination of the operation on 27 August. A major accomplishment of the operation was the disorganization and dispersal of the 274th Regiment prior to the South Vietnamese presidential election on 3 September 1967.

A month later the 1st Brigade launched Operation Akron III, a reconnaissance in force operation into the Hat Dich [Base Area 303] on 26 September. Between the termination of Akron II and the start of Akron III the 11th Cavalry had conducted Operation Arkansas City in the same targeted area. Brigade forces consisted of the 5th Cavalry, 2d and 4th Battalions, 39th Infantry, B Company, 2d Battalion, 47th Infantry [M], 48th ARVN Regiment and 52d ARVN Ranger Battalion both 18th ARVN Division units. These forces were again being sent into the jungle with a two fold mission. First, they were to try and locate elements of the 274th Viet Cong Regiment and their supplies and installations. Second, they were to clear trails through the jungle to reduce future Viet Cong use of the area.

On 8 October Task Force 3-5 Cavalry<sup>14</sup> found a weapons and ammunition cache in Phuoc Tuy Province 7½ miles east of Highway 15. This find lead to several other weapons cache of small arms, crew served weapons, and artillery. The artillery pieces were the first taken from the Viet Cong by United States forces. As the find was explored the weapons were brought back to Fire Support Base Brown adjacent to Highway 15 ½ mile north of Thai Thien. The 5th Cavalry's tactical operations center and supporting artillery were located at Brown. As the magnitude of the weapons cache increased General Westmoreland and his Viet-

name counterpart General Cao Van Vien visited the fire support base to see the cache for themselves.

The area of the find spanned a 2,200 yard area and an intricate subterranean system containing chambers as deep as 35 feet, with three to five levels, and ceilings from four to six feet high. The cache included 1,022 small arms, 125 crew served weapons, almost 95,000 rounds of small arms ammunition, 3,364 recoilless rifle shells, and 452 mortar rounds. The haul also included four 75mm Howitzers. Also captured during the lengthy underground exploration were 1,335 pounds of medical supplies which were enough to treat 1,000 patients for a month.

In addition large quantities of rice, clothing and supplies were captured along with maps, medical records, tax collector sheets, book keeping logs, duty rosters and Viet Cong unit citations. Once the search was completed demolition experts destroyed the vast underground network.

During Akron III units made many contacts with the Viet Cong who chose to remain dispersed and not to engage the operational forces. During the operation 1,357.6 acres of jungle were cleared. And most important was the 5th Cavalry's discovery of the largest land-based cache found in Vietnam to date in the Vietnam War. On 20 October the 5th Cavalry returned to Bearcat and stood down. Following the termination of Akron III a squadron element participated in Operation Coronado VIII conducted by the Mobile Riverine Force in the southern Nhon Trach and northern Rung Sat Secret Zone in coordination with squadron elements and the Royal Thai "Queen's Cobras" Regiment. There were few encounters during Operation Coronado VIII that was conducted between 27-29 October.

As the ground forces were busy in the jungles D Troop had been supporting all three division brigades. It was also supporting LRRP insertions and extractions. And the troop was providing one light fire team for counter mortar/rocket standby alternately between Tan An and Dong Tam base camps. The LRRP and counter mortar/rocket standby missions would be ongoing for D Troop.

On 4 November the 5th Cavalry returned to the field for participation in Operation Santa Fe a 1st Brigade operation. Operation Santa Fe's objectives were to locate and destroy elements of the 5th Viet Cong Division in the May Tao Secret Zone. To provide security for the 15th and 86th Engineer Battalions building bridges and clearing jungle along Highway 1 from Gia Ray to the II Corps boundary. And to open that route and clear trails along Route 331 and 2B to provide ready access to the May Tao Secret Zone and the villages of Ham Tam

and Ham Tan.

The high point of the operation would be the security and upgrading operations along Highway 1 and Route 2B. These major routes of communication had not been used since 1962 due to the destruction of most of the eleven bridges in the brigade's AO.

For the first phase of the operation the 5th Cavalry was sent back into central Phuoc Tuy Province where it had operated in during Operations Portsea II and Paddington. The 5th Cavalry's mission was to locate and interdict Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army supply lines. To emplace and secure two AVLB bridges at Song Rai on Route 327 which had been designated bridge site Chunky. Secure the bridge site for the crossing of allied forces and secure Fire Support Bases Lion and Tiger plus elements of the 18th ARVN Division. Provide indirect fire support and escort logistical convoys from Blackhorse to Xuan Loc. Logistical support for the squadron was from the 506th Supply and Service Detachment at Blackhorse. Maintenance support was to be provided by a contact team from the division's A Company, 709th Maintenance Battalion.

On 3 November the 1st Brigade launching Operation Santa Fe conducted both airmobile assaults and tactical road marches into the brigade's operational area. While the brigade's ground movement was escorted by the 2d Battalion, 47th Infantry [M], D Troop provided light fire team support during the 70 mile road march from Bearcat to Fire Support/Patrol Base Wildcat at Ap Rung La on the Long Khanh-Binh Tuy Province border, and screened to the northeast in zone. At late afternoon on the 3d the Aero Rifle Platoon was inserted north of the Sung Dinh 6½ miles southeast of Wildcat and found several old trails. A check of the area was made with negative results.

On 4 November as the ground elements were moving to their operational area D Troop conducted search and destroy operations 2½ miles east of Wildcat with the troop's Aero Rifle Platoon without contact. The air cavalrymen also provided air screen in zone and inserted the LRRPs into AO Bluejay I and II without sighting or contact.

On the 4th B Troop was successful with the assistance of the 1st Australian Task Force in laying the two AVLB bridges from E Company, 15th Engineer Battalion at bridge site Chunky. The troop also secured Fire Support Base Lion and Tiger. Lion was located adjacent to Route 328 3 miles north of its junction with Route 327 between former Paddington fire support base sites George and Mike. While Fire Support Base Tiger was situated 6 miles north of

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of Lion on Route 330. Route 330 and 328 converged between the two fire support bases. Fire support for the operation was provided by A Battery, 2d Battalion, 35th Artillery [155SP] which was stationed at Fire Support Base Tiger. Also participating in the 5th Cavalry's area of operation were elements of the 1st Australian Task Force and the 27th Engineer Battalion.

Both A and C Troops were deployed to the east of Route 2 in intensive reconnaissance in force operations. Because of the number of mines found on the access routes to their locations all resupply was conducted by air. And elements attempting to recover damaged vehicles had to be accompanied by a mine sweep team and a security party. During their operations both troops were successful and found large bunker complexes, small quantities of weapons, documents, and small arms ammunition.

On 5 November after D Troop had extracted the LRRPs from the area of operation without incident it was released by the 1st Brigade to the operational control of Task Force Forsyth at Bearcat. A provisional organization Task Force Forsyth in the absence of the 1st Brigade Headquarters was provided operational control of sufficient forces to secure the division base camp and to conduct limited strike operations [Operation Riley] around Bearcat.

On 16 November the squadron concluded its participation in the first phase of Operation Santa Fe. During its participation there had been 4 men killed and 9 wounded. In addition, 3 tanks and 1 ACAV, and 2 Rome plows had been damaged by RPGs and mines. B Troop was left under the operational control of the sector advisor, 43d ARVN Regiment, and would continue its participation in Operation Santa Fe. Upon the completion of its participation in Santa Fe the squadron returned to Bearcat in preparation for its movement to Tan An and participation in the ongoing 3d Brigade's Operation Enterprise in Long An Province.

Leaving its heavy armored vehicles at Bearcat the 5th Cavalry proceeded onto the 3d Brigade's base camp. On the 15th of November the brigade's command post had displaced to Dong Tam as the brigade began Operation Kien Giang 1-9 with the 2d Brigade along the border of Kien Phuong and Dinh Tuong Province in Base Area 470. The brigade would not return to Long An Province until 19 November.

The 5th Cavalry came under the 3d Brigade's operational control. At Tan An A and C Troops maintained security of the brigade's base camp and conducted periodic roadrunner and convoy escort operations. While the Birdogs conducted limited mounted reconnaissance operations and convoy escort between Tan Thuan [Tan Tru] where the brigade's 2d Battalion, 60th Infantry and Binh

Phuoc where the 5th Battalion, 60th Infantry [M] were stationed. Both Battalions were on operation with the brigade.

On 21 November the squadron completed its participation in Operation Enterprise and returned to Bearcat. During the five days the squadron participated in the operation it had 2 men wounded in action. Meantime, B Troop had been placed under the 11th Cavalry's operational control on the 21st. The troop was located at Fire Support Base Tiger.

The next day the 5th Cavalry commenced Operation Witch. The squadron's mission was to conduct search and destroy operations. Secure the tactical transphibian tree crusher. Provide security for Task Force Forsyth's MEDCAPs. Provide indirect fire support for ARVN operations. And provide ready reaction forces for Binh Son and Highway 15 in the vicinity of Bearcat. Supporting forces in the operation included A Battery, 1st Battalion, 11th Artillery [105T], and B Company, 2d Battalion, 39th Infantry.

The most intriguing aspect of Operation Witch were two mammoth 93-ton transphibian tactical tree crushers that the Army had leased from Le Tourneau and were testing in Vietnam. They were operated by the Tree Crusher Detachment [Provisional] who were attached to the 34th Engineer Group and further attached to the 93d Engineer Battalion [Construction] for operational control, support, and evaluation. The 9th Infantry Division had operational control of the crushers. On firm ground they could clear ten acres in one hour. They could fell large trees and cut moderate size timber into sticks which were pressed into the ground. The operation concluded on 26 November. During the operation 2 members of B Company, 2d Battalion, 39th Infantry were wounded in action. And 2 M-1 rifles, 1 German Mauser, and 1 75mm recoilless rifle were captured. At the same time B Troop moved from Fire Support Base Tiger up to Fire Support/Patrol Base Wildcat and came under the 1st Brigade's operational control. B Troop relieved B Company, 2d Battalion, 47th Infantry [M] of its security mission at Wildcat.

On 30 November the 5th Cavalry rejoining Operation Santa Fe now in its third phase road marched to Wildcat. Upon their arrival A and C Troops prepared for future operations. At mid-morning B Troop had been placed under the operational control of the 2d Battalion, 47th Infantry [M] and would remain so throughout the 5th Cavalry's participation in the operation. During the day the troop had sent a platoon to Fire Support/Patrol Base Leopard. Since its arrival at Wildcat B Troop had also conducted local patrolling. At the same time A Company, 2d Battalion, 47th Infantry [M] was placed under the 5th Cavalry's

operational control and would remain so for the operation.

The next day the 5th Cavalry attacked eastward on Highway 1 with A Troop attacking at 6:55 a.m. The troop advanced eastward to Fire Support/Patrol Base Alleycat which was located 11 miles due east of Wildcat. The squadron's tactical operations center was established at Alleycat. Fifty minutes later C Troop attacked up the highway to a position adjacent to the road 5 miles east of Alleycat and outposted along the highway. At Wildcat B Troop conducted local patrolling in addition to its primary mission of guarding Wildcat, and during the day the platoon at Leopard returned to Wildcat. At late morning a D Troop light scout team sighted an individual pushing a bicycle loaded with food and sighted in the same area along Sông Sinh 3½ miles southwest of Alleycat a camp site.

On 2 December as A Troop continued to secure Alleycat and outpost the highway it conducted local patrolling also. A Troop would secure Alleycat through the squadron's participation in Operation Santa Fe III. During the day C Troop continued to outpost the highway and moved a platoon up to the bridge site slightly south of Fire Support/Patrol Base Tomcat, a move of 13/4 miles to the east of the troop's current location. At early evening a C Troop element received small arms fire near Ap Da Mai [2] 2 miles west of Alleycat. During the day A Company had conducted roadrunner operations between Phase Line Jane and Alleycat and during the afternoon had taken one round of RPG fire which caused no casualties or damage. Presently Tomcat was being secured by the 43d ARVN Regiment. During the day B Troop conducted local patrolling.

The next day A Troop conducted a reconnaissance of Route 2B south to Ham Tan on the South China Sea without contact. A Troop continued to secure Alleycat, and conduct local patrolling also. In addition to outposting the highway, C Troop also secured engineers repairing bridges south of Tomcat. Finally at 6:55 p.m. they moved across the obstacle and linked up with the ARVNs at Tomcat. And B Troop conducted local patrolling.

The following day 4 December in addition to its security mission and outposting mission A Troop also conducted roadrunner operations. And C Troop continued to outpost along the highway also secured the engineers working on the highway. C Troop also conducted combined search and destroy operations with the ARVNs east to the II Corps boundary. And A Company which had relocated adjacent to the highway ½ mile west of Alleycat outposted the highway and conducted local patrolling in addition to conducting roadrunner operations. And



B Troop continued to conduct local patrolling in addition to securing Wildcat.

The next day A Troop continued its previous day's missions. And C Troop relocating its command post  $4\frac{1}{4}$  miles east of Tomcat established a fire support/patrol base with one platoon from the 1st Battalion, 11th Artillery [105T]. And the troop also conducted search and destroy operations. During the day A Company relocated its command post to the east of Tomcat and conducted local patrolling and outposted and secured the highway. At late afternoon the company detained two males without identification. They were evacuated for interrogation. The next day squadron forces continued their missions. During the day A Company moved its command post to the west of Tomcat and continued with its mission.

The following day 7 December A Troop while still securing Alleycat and Highway 1 conducted patrols in zone 1,000 meters to the north and south of the highway. While C Troop secured Highway 1 from just east of Tomcat on east to Ap Phu Minh in II Corps and outposted all critical points along the highway in zone. While A Company securing Highway 1 in zone and secured bridge sites 8 and 9. The company also provided one company to assist the 1st Battalion, 43d ARVN Regiment in securing Tomcat. B Troop still securing Wildcat also secured Highway 1 and engineer clearing operations. In addition the troop conducted local patrolling without contact. The next day A Troop's mission varied from the previous day by the addition of roadrunner operations. The remainder of the squadron carried on with their previous day's activities. The following day 8 December B Troop at Wildcat had a change in its activities. B Troop conducted search and destroy operations north of Highway 1 in the vicinity of Song Oi without contact. And B Troop provided the brigade's ready reaction force. But it was not committed. The next day squadron activities continued unchanged.

The following day 11 December the squadron patrolled actively. A Troop conducted patrols to the north and south of Highway 1 without contact. And C Troop patrolled approximately 2 miles to the northwest of its position. During the day one of its platoons received one round of RPG fire-but incurred no casualties or damage. Artillery engaged the enemy with unknown results. During the day A Company patrolled to the northwest into Tan Linh District and located several trail markers and other signs of activity. While B Troop patrolled to the north of Highway 1 without contact. The following day A Troop accounted for one female detainee who was evacuated to Blackhorse. While C Troop patrolling  $2\frac{1}{4}$  miles to the northwest found and destroyed two bicycles,

a small bag of rice and noted evidence of a fire approximately two days old. And A Company patrolled to the Ham Tan-Tanh Linh District boundary.

On 13 December A Troop continued to secure Alleycat and outpost Highway 1 in zone. The troop also secured the engineers clearing and upgrading Route 2B without incident. C Troop continued to secure Highway 1 and the engineers clearing and upgrading the highway in zone. The troop also conducted a patrol to the north of the highway. While A Company secured Highway 1 in zone and conducted a patrol to the north of the highway with one find. The company found and destroyed 2 bunkers and 1 hut. While B Troop continued to secure Wildcat and Highway 1 in zone and conducted patrolling. The next day A Troop continued to secure engineer cutting operations along Route 2B. While C Troop patrolling 23/4 miles south of its position made one find. Its 2d Platoon found and destroyed 4 bunkers and 2 huts. And A Company patrolled to the south of the highway. While B Troop patrolled to both the north and south of Highway 1.

The next day 15 December was the squadron's last full day of participation in Operation Santa Fe III. A Troop continued to secure Alleycat and outpost Highway 1 in zone. The troop also secured engineer clearing and upgrading of Highway 1 and Route 2B. C Troop secured Highway 1 and engineer clearing of the highway in zone. The troop also conducted patrolling 1½ miles southwest of its position adjacent to Route 341. While A Company secured Tomcat and engineer clearing and upgrading of Highway 1 in zone. During a patrol 2 miles west of the highway the company found 2 small punji pits, 2 huts, and a 150 pound rice grinding machine which were all destroyed. B Troop secured Wildcat and outposted Highway 1 in zone. The troop also conducted patrolling to the south of the highway.

On 16 December the 5th Cavalry continued to secure Highway 1 in zone until relieved by the 2d Battalion, 47th Infantry [M] and ARVN Task Force Binh Tuy at 1:33 p.m. The 2d Battalion, 47th Infantry [M] moved its command post to Tomcat and assumed responsibility for the eastern portion of the 1st Brigade's A0. And the 35th ARVN Ranger Battalion relieved the 5th Cavalry of security at Alleycat. The squadron then moved to a position east of Wildcat until 4:00 p.m. when it started its roadmarch back to Bearcat. The 1st Brigade released the 5th Cavalry to the operational control of Task Force Forsyth upon its closing at Bearcat.

With its return to Bearcat the squadron commenced Operation Reindeer in Long Thanh District of Bien Hoa Province. The 5th Cavalry's mission was to interdict east-west lines of communications across Highway 15 from the Phu My

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airstrip in the south to Long Thanh in the north. It was to provide ready reaction force to Nhon Trach, Long Thanh, Binh Son, and the Bearcat area. It was also to conduct strike operations into AO Cambridge. For the operation the squadron established a fire support base north of Thai Thien near the location of its Akron III fire support base. At the fire support base was located B Battery, 2d Battalion, 35th Artillery [155SP].

On the night of 20 December the fire support base was attacked by the Viet Cong. And in the heat of the fighting A and C Troops and artillery received an emergency resupply of ammunition. The resupply was conducted by D Troop with its UH1-D's and the 200th Assault Helicopter Company "Pachyderms" with their CH-47's. The 200th was also Bearcat based. In the fighting C Troop had 4 men killed and collectively there were 15 wounded. In addition 1 APC was destroyed and 1 tank damaged by RPG fire. The Viet Cong sustained 21 killed, 2 wounded, and 2 captured.

The 5th Cavalry less C Troop which would be a ready reaction force at Long Binh until the squadron moved to Blackhorse, returned to Bearcat on 22 December in preparation for the squadron's resumption of Operation Kittyhawk, which the squadron was suppose to assume responsibility for on 26 December. But the squadron was notified it would not be assuming Operation Kittyhawk until 28 December 1967. And the squadron's participation in Reindeer continued until the 26th of December. Meantime, D Troop was conducting Operation Akron IV a continuing overflight watch of AO Akron.

THE LAST KITTYHAWK

On 28 December the 5th Cavalry roadmarched back to Blackhorse and relieved the 3d Squadron, 11th Cavalry, and assumed responsibility for Operation Kittyhawk. Upon its relief the 3d Squadron rejoined its parent regiment which was under the operational control of II Field Force and deployed in the 1st Infantry Division's area of operation. With the squadron's assumption of Operation Kittyhawk came the various missions that made up Kittyhawk. Since its last participation in the operation in August the security mission at Gia Ray had been reduced to a platoon size mission.

With the squadron's assumption of Operation Kittyhawk came the responsibility for the squadron to run the third of three convoys from Vung Tau to Blackhorse. Originally the squadron was to have assumed the Kittyhawk mission on 26 December and would have run the convoy on the 27th as well as on the 31st. But because of the two day delay in the squadron moving to Blackhorse the 3d Squadron, 11th Cavalry ran the 27th's convoy. And because of the delay the requirement for the 5th Cavalry running the 31st convoy became subordinated to the ongoing activities of the squadron leading to its final move to Blackhorse.

And it was only after the squadron's move to Blackhorse that the squadron's operations officer was reminded of the squadron's requirement to escort the 31 December convoy by the staff of the 9th Infantry Division over an unsecured telephone<sup>15</sup>. C Troop which had the mission was given the requirements of the escort mission. The operations officer going on rest and recuperation leave turned it over to his assistant. The assistant was aware only that the reminder had come over the regular telephone, saw no reason to be secretive about the remaining arrangements and made a number of additional calls to discuss the details of the convoy mission with the various effected parties. Having given the mission back to C Troop, the assistant operations officer backed out of the problem, assuming that some previously approved plan would be implemented. He also assumed that the renewed convoy assignment must have been passed along to all of the staff; he therefore, did not include it in the first operations briefing that he ran on 30 December after the operation officers departure.

Consequently not even the squadron commander was aware of the convoy mission. Given the mission C Troop's commander because of his familiarity with the area from previous operations believed the sector to be relatively quiet. When in fact there had been no combat operations conducted in the area for over thirty days. He planned to make a routine tactical night roadmarch to Vung Tau,

37 miles to the south, to rendezvous with the convoy at 9:00 a.m. on the 31st. Two platoon size elements were to make the march while the troop commander remained at Blackhorse with the third platoon ready to assist if needed. The platoons were to leave the base camp at 3:30 a.m. and march south on Route 2. One platoon was to stop along Route 2 about a third of the way to Vung Tau, and spend the night running the road to Blackhorse to prevent enemy interference on the route. The second platoon would continue onto Vung Tau and pick up the convoy and escort it to Blackhorse. It would be joined enroute by the platoon which had been running the road. But there were no designated check points for the platoons to report their progress of their march to the squadron's operations center. And there had been no arranged for on call artillery fire layed on in case there would be a need for it.

At 3:30 a.m. on 31 December the column moved out as planned with only the assistant operations officer knowing about it. The lead platoon, commanded by the 2d platoon leader, consisted of one tank from the 3d Platoon, two ACAV's from the 2d, the troop commander's APC and the maintenance section's APC, which were being employed as ACAV's. The next platoon, commanded by the 3d Platoon leader consisted of one tank from the 2d Platoon, two ACAV's from the 3d Platoon, two from the 1st, and the 1st Platoon mortar carrier without its mortar. The two tanks intermittenly used their driving lights to illuminate and observe the sides of the road as they lead their respective platoons down Route 2.

About 5.6 miles south of Blackhorse, Route 2 crested a slight rise, then ran streight south for 1.2 miles and then crested another rise. The flanks had been cleared out to about 330 feet. As the lead tank started up the southmost rise at 4:10 p.m. the last vehicle in the convoy, the mortar carrier, was leveling off on the streight stretch 1.2 miles to the rear. Suddenly a rocket propelled grenade hit the lead tank, killing the driver and stopping the tank in the middle of the road. An ambush then erupted along the entire 1.2 mile stretch of the road. A hail of grenades quickly set the remaining vehicles of the lead platoon on fire. As the trailing platoon directed his platoon into a herring-bone, the mortar carrier was hit by a command detonated mine and exploding mortar ammunition destroyed the carrier. The lead tank was hit by a rocket propelled grenade, and ran off the road, blew up and burned. The surprise was so complete that no organized fire was returned. When individual vehicles attempted to return fire, the Viet Cong firing in a deadfall some fifteen meters off the road, concentrated on that vehicle until it stopped firing. Within ten minutes the fight was over.

At daybreak the devastating results of the ambush was apparent in the battered and burned out hulks that lay scattered along the road. Collectively, C Troop suffered 42 casualties: 7 killed in action, 3 died from their wounds, 29 were wounded in action, and 3 men were missing in action. And the troop had 2 tanks, 5 APC's [APC and ACAVs], and 1 mortar carrier damaged or destroyed in the ambush. There were no apparent casualties inflicted upon the estimated two platoons of Viet Cong who had ambushed C Troop. By evening all the vehicles except one tank had been retrieved and returned to Blackhorse. C Troop had been hurt and had to be rebuilt and reorganized before it would again be combat capable. New men and vehicles would be brought to Blackhorse to fill C Troop's depleted ranks. For nearly two weeks following the ambush C Troop rising like the fabled Phoenix from the ashes of ambush gradually began to reemerge as a combat effective unit. The troop became responsible for both the security of Blackhorse and the engineer quarry at Gia Ray. As the base camp security force C Troop undertook daytime missions as well as securing MEDCAPS. Following the ambush Colonel Fuller turned the command of the 5th Cavalry over to Lieutenant Colonel Hugh J. Bartley.

Then on 11 January 1968 A Troop was sent back to Bien Hoa Province to participate in Operation Akron V in southwestern Long Thanh District. The troop roadmarched from Xuan Loc to the vicinity of Landing Zone Pliers in the jungle 10 miles east of Highway 15 and secured the landing zone. A Company [-], 4th Battalion, 39th Infantry air assaulted into Pliers and went under A Troop's operational control. The troop then screened in zone and went under the operational control of Task Force 2d Battalion, 47th Infantry [M]. The following day D Troop while supporting the task force engaged 3 Viet Cong and killed 1 of them. During the day and on to the 13th of January A Troop and A Company [-] continued their screening operations in zone without contact.

The next day 14 January A Troop swept to the southwest and received sniper fire at 11:45 a.m. from an unknown size Viet Cong force which caused no casualties. At the same time a troop element while escorting an AVLB received RPG, small arms, and automatic weapons fire, that resulted in 2 wounded and 1 ACAV destroyed. And at mid-afternoon the troop found a partially destroyed Mauser rifle. While A Company [-] continued to maintain screening/blocking position along the engineer trail on the northern boundary of the AO.

The following day A Company [-] was extracted from LZ Pliers and returned to Bearcat at midmorning. And A Troop was released from the operational control of Task Force 2d Battalion, 47th Infantry [M] at 1:00 p.m. and roadmarched back

to Blackhorse. In assessing the operation the 1st Brigade wrote in its combat operations after action report that D Troop performed admirably its over-flight mission [Akron IV] and gathered valuable intelligence, but did not possess the troops to curtail Viet Cong movement and operations. The brigade wrote the airmobile and ground assaults of the 2d Battalion, 39th Infantry and 2d Battalion, 47th Infantry [M], and the sweep east toward the 1st Australian Task Force and 3d Squadron, 5th Cavalry block, trapped several elements of the 274th Regiment. This was verified by the moderately heavy contacts and enemy delaying actions encountered in base camp locations. The contacts succeeded in fragmenting the VC/NVA elements, eliminating several of their coveted base locations, and sharply altered their plans. Though A Troop terminated its participation on the 15th the operation continued until 21 January.

On 29 January 1968 the 5th Cavalry made its final dispositions in advance of the 36-hour Lunar New Years Tet Cease Fire. 1968 was the year of the monkey and the cease fire was set to start in all but South Vietnam's I Corps where it had been cancelled, at 6:00 p.m. that evening. A Troop was guarding Fire Support Base Apple near the site of old Fire Support Base 4, where A Battery, 1st Battalion, 11th Artillery [105T] was positioned. B Troop was at Blackhorse. C Troop with its 2d Platoon at Gia Ray was located on Highway 1 at Boa Toan with the mission of securing Highway 1 from Tan Phong to Gia Ray. And D Troop was at Bearcat under the 1st Brigade's operational control.

At midmorning the next day the Allies Tet cease fire was cancelled because of the severity of the communist attacks in both I and II corps. They had launched attacks against Nha Trang, Ban Me Thout, Kontum, Qui Nhon, and Pleiku in II Corps. And they had launched attacks against Da Nang and Hoi An in I Corps. With the cancellation of the cease fire American forces were put on a high state of alert. During the day C Troop's 3d Platoon which had been outposting Highway 1 during the night proceeded onto Gia Ray and relieved the 2d Platoon which then rejoined the troop at Boa Toan. The troop's three mortar carriers were in battery at Gia Ray. Activity continued routinely until 8:00 p.m. when C Troop was notified of the cease fire cancellation nearly eleven hours after it had occurred.

The next morning 31 January A Troop at 7:00 a.m. was ordered to leave its 3d Platoon at Fire Support Base Apple for security, and proceed towards Bien Hoa. The troop commander was to be briefed on the move by the squadron commander. Presently the 5th Viet Cong Division was mounting major attacks in the Bien

Hoa-Long Binh area. As A Troop was advancing the 9th Infantry Division's, 2d Battalion, 47th Infantry [M] as part of Operation Riley had been acting as a reactionary force at Long Binh, already had elements in action at the Long Binh ammo dump and the South Vietnamese III Corps Headquarters and III Corps Prisoner Of War camp.

As A Troop entered the village of Trang Bom it was met by a company size ambush which lasted only ten minutes as the troop still moving, concentrated its fire along the roadside and rode through the ambush. The troop received sporadic fire as it advanced west on Highway 1 to the concrete bridge at Suoi Dai 11 miles east of Bien Hoa. After the first tank had crossed the bridge a thunderous explosion dropped the span into the stream. While the troop's ACAV's had no trouble fording the stream the remainder of the troop's tanks had to be left at the bridge.

Now out of radio range with both the squadron headquarters and Bien Hoa A Troop continued onto the city of Bien Hoa only to find the square filled with two companies of Viet Cong and North Vietnamese soldiers. The 1st Platoon charged through the enemy not realizing who they were. But by the time the troop commander arrived, the enemy forces had dispersed and opened fire disabling 2 ACAV's. The 2d Platoon pushed them aside and entered the square in a hail of machine gun fire. A Troop was now down to one tank and eight ACAV's.

Continuing on the move the troop was joined by the squadron commander in a light observation helicopter who from the air directed the troop to the Bien Hoa Air Base. As he flew over the troop Colonel Bartley spotted an enemy ambush just outside the air base, with several hundred Viet Cong and North Vietnamese in ditches near the southeast entrance to the base. The troop quickly moved off the road, some thirty to forty meters behind the ambush, firing as they went, destroying the enemy force on one side of the road. The 5th Viet Cong Division's 274th Regiment was attacking the Bien Hoa Air Base, while its 275th Regiment was attacking at Long Binh.

Upon entering the air base A Troop was attached to the 101st Airborne Division's, 2d Battalion, 506th Infantry, which was attempting to reduce enemy forces on the base perimeter. The paratroopers had been flown in from Phuoc Vinh in response to the 274th Regiment's attack on the Bien Hoa Air Base. A Troop was then split between two companies of paratroopers attacking an enemy position at the southeast corner of the base. The fighting lasted most of the day, and culminated in a breakout attempt by the enemy that was stopped short by A Troop. In this fighting the troop lost 2 ACAV's and the lone tank lost



two crews and took nineteen hits from rocket propelled grenades but stayed in the fighting. For the remainder of the day A Troop was the reaction force for the air base defense. During the days fighting A Troop had 6 men killed and 24 wounded. And the troop was credited with 40 Viet Cong kills while the 2d Battalion, 506th Infantry claimed 100.

Meantime action remained heavy in the Long Binh area also. In response to the 275th attack on the II Field Force Headquarters elements of the 2d Battalion, 47th Infantry [M] and an element of the 4th Battalion, 39th Infantry, engaged Viet Cong in Widows Village across the street from II Field Force Headquarters. And the 47th Infantry also had an element fighting with elements of the 199th Light Infantry Brigade near the village of Ho Nai.

As the fighting had raged in the Bien Hoa-Long Binh area the 11th Cavalry which had been conducting operations in the thick jungles of War Zone C, pulled out during the morning, consolidated, and then moved 62 miles to Bien Hoa in just eight hours. By 9:00 p.m. the regiment had cycled the Bien Hoa-Long Binh complex with armor.

Meantime back in Long Khanh Province C Troop had been pulled off of Highway 1 and sent into Xuan Loc at mid-afternoon. The next morning 1 February C Troop leaving its wheeled vehicles and one APC for security at its position next to the 54th Artillery Group's headquarters compound, moved up to Fire Support Base Apple to reinforce A Troop which returned to Apple that morning. The next day 2 February C Troop moved west into Bien Hoa Province to recover damaged A Troop vehicles. While its elements in Xuan Loc moved up to Apple during the morning. Through the afternoon sighting reports of groups of people on the move in the vicinity of Xuan Loc were received. As these reports continued to come in the situation at Xuan Loc became more ominous. But it was not until late afternoon, after an AVLB bridge at Suoi Dai had been taken up, that C Troop reached Fire Support Base Apple. To facilitate refueling, tankers had been positioned alongside the highway to refuel the vehicles as they passed by them on the highway. Without refueling an advance guard under the command of the troop's executive officer sped back into Xuan Loc to secure the troop's position before the main bodies arrival back in the provincial capital.

Though it was positioned inside the provincial capital nearly surrounded on all sides by United States Army and South Vietnamese Army compounds, guard was maintained on all the troop vehicles upon their arrival back in Xuan Loc. At approximately 11:00 p.m. the darkened sky over C Troop cracked with the sounds of small arms fire. While to the northwest the sky over the cities west gate

was alive with tracers as Viet Cong <sup>16</sup> gunners pumped mortar fire into the city of Xuan Loc. The Viet Cong launched their assault on the city from the Don Dien de An loc Rubber Plantation on the northwest side of Xuan Loc. Against the weight of the Viet Cong attack the ARVN defenders were unable to contain the attacking Viet Cong who fought their way into the provincial capital, and pressed their attack against the police station-government complex. At the same time other Viet Cong established an ambush to counteract a reactionary force response to their attack.

At Xuan Loc ARVN Brigadier General Do Ke Giai's 18th ARVN Division had its 43d Regiment with its 1st and 2d Battalions, stationed with it at Xuan Loc. Also the division's 52d ARVN Ranger Battalion and 5th Armored Cavalry Group were also stationed at Xuan Loc. While the United States Army's 54th Artillery Group had C Battery, 7th Battalion, 9th Artillery [105T] located in Headquarters, 2d Battalion, 35th Artillery's [155SP] compound. And C Battery, 1st Battalion, 83d Artillery [175-8" SP] was located in its compound near Xuan Loc's airstrip.

Initially C Troop was held in reserve as the attack developed. Then the troop was ordered into action. With its 2d Platoon leading C Troop started its movement back down the street toward the scene of the fighting. Stopping briefly in front of the provincial headquarters compound the troop commander ran his wheeled vehicles and most of his Headquarters Platoon tracked vehicles inside the walled compound. The tracked vehicles were moved right up against the wall so their .50-caliber machine guns could be brought to bear against any assault on the compound. Continuing with its 2d Platoon leading and Headquarters elements in the middle, and the 1st Platoon in the rear, C Troop reached Highway 1, then advanced up the street toward the besieged police station-government complex.

Suddenly the lead tank's commander caught sight of a Viet Cong off to the side of his tank pointing an RPG point blank at his tank. But a burst from the platoon sergeant's grease gun cut the Viet Cong down before he could fire. Instantly RPG's hit the troop commander's APC and two other Headquarters Platoon vehicles at mid-column. But none faltered. And C Troop fought its way up the street and attacked headlong into the Viet Cong who now became the hunted. Blunted the Viet Cong's attack on the police station-government complex ceased and the troop then attacked out beyond the cities west gate. Reaching the rubber plantation the troop regrouped and launched a sweep of Xuan Loc's outskirts for more Viet Cong.

After completing its sweep C Troop started back for its position within the

city but stopped briefly in front of the MACV compound so casualties could be taken to the dispensary inside the compound. During the fighting C Troop had 1 man killed and 10 wounded. Combined US/ARVN forces killed 125 Viet Cong of which C Troop was credited with killing 49 of them. Though some of C Troop's vehicles had sustained damage none of them were immobilized in the fighting. And with the arrival of daylight and morning C Troop's commander established three strong points within the city. Vehicles were sent to both the west and south gates to the city as well as into the provincial headquarters compound.

While A Troop had been fighting at the Bien Hoa Air Base and C Troop at Xuan Loc, Gia Ray though tense from anticipation had remained unmolested, as the Viet Cong shooting it all went for more lucrative larger targets. At the quarry in addition to C Troop's 3d Platoon, was A Company, 36th Engineer Battalion [Construction] which operated the quarry. And C Company, 27th Engineer Battalion [Combat] was at Gia Ray while upgrading Highway 1.

On 4 February C Troop was given the mission of clearing Highway 1 from Tan Phong east to Gia Ray. Starting at early morning progress was slow and tedious but the troop finally reached the intersection with Route 333 at late afternoon. 3d Platoon elements advancing from the quarry linked up with the troop at the road junction. At this point C Troop was ordered to return to Xuan Loc and reoccupy its strong points without delay as another Viet Cong attack on the city was expected. 3d Platoon elements accompanied the troop nearly to Suoi Cat where they secured three ARVN trucks that had been ambushed just east of the village. Then without incident C Troop roadmarched onto Xuan Loc and reoccupied its three strong points. The Viet Cong launched their attack against the city's west gate at 9:00 p.m. Again combining their ground attack with a mortar attack the Viet Cong attempted to fight their way into the city. But this time the combined Cavalry-ARVN fire power stopped them cold outside the city's perimeter where helicopter gunships rocketed and minnie gunned them. At least one cavalryman was wounded at the provincial headquarters compound during the mortar attack. This attack was a pale imitation of their 2-3 February attack and was over shortly after it had started.

For the 5th Cavalry Tet had been a time of heavy fighting. Both A and C Troops would receive Valorous Unit Awards for their respective actions at the Bien Hoa Air Base and at Xuan Loc. And B Troop had had three consecutive nights of contact during the offensive while on route security operations on Route 2 between Blackhorse and Xuan Loc. And C Troop was not withdrawn from

Feb. 21, 1968

THE OLD RELIABLE

# Near Bien Hoa, Xuan Loc

Page 3

# 2d-5th Cav turns back six enemy attacks

By SP5 Bruce McIlhenny  
Staff Writer

**LONG THANH**—The Division's 3d Squadron, 5th Armored Cavalry Regiment charged to the rescue of two important military bases—Bien Hoa and Xuan Loc—during the week of Jan. 31-Feb. 6.

Troops A and C were employed in turning the tables on six separate Viet Cong attacks. **FIRE SUPPORT BASE AP-1**—Early Jan. 31, Troop A was ordered to relieve Bien Hoa Air Force Base, under assault by a 10-man VC demolition force.

The 1st and 2d platoons, led by the troop commander, rolled down Highway 15 with a force of 12 Armored Personnel Carriers and two tanks. Waiting along their route to Bien Hoa were three VC attacks. The force had traveled five miles to the village of Trang Hom when the lead tank, driven by Private First Class Joseph L. Evans, 21, of Eric, Pa., was struck by a rifle grenade.

"The grenade hit the right front fender, tore on through and hit my helmet," said Evans. "It drove my head back against the turret so hard that the helmet cracked. I was pretty dizzy, but in a while I was able to drive straight through the VC column. At the first enemy attack, the column formed a herring bone

pattern on the village road and flanked enemy positions with all of its arsenal.

While the 50 cal and M-60 machineguns pinned down the enemy, 90mm cannon fire from the tanks eliminated pockets of resistance.

The column continued on to a Vietnamese Regional Forces outpost near the Air Force base where they were told of a VC position 500 meters down the road.

"Instead of driving into the attack, we flanked it," explained Captain Ralph Garretson, 28, of Columbus, Ga., troop commander.

"They were in spider holes all over the place," recalled Private First Class Raymond A. Broussard 22, of Houston, Tex. "I had a lot of targets. My track commander would spot a VC and yell 'there he goes', and I'd get him. We killed about 10 of them."

After smothering the attack, the column screamed into the village of Bien Hoa, with the tank leading.

"Small groups of villagers motioned for us to stop and go back," said Garretson. "We appreciated their sympathy, but we waved them aside and went on. Right in the middle of town, a rifle really unloaded every thing at us," Garretson con-

tinued.

Staff Sergeant Johnnie C. Branch, 26, of Hollis, Okla., spotted a line of firing positions along a road and maneuvered his tank for a clear shot at them.

"We fired two rounds from the main gun, then an RPG-2 rocket hit the front of the turret and blew me off," said Branch. "I'd just about climbed back on when another rocket hit the side and blew me off again."

Branch was evacuated on the troop commander's APC.

"One of the things I've taught my men is to stand toe to toe and slug it out in an attack," said Garretson. "The volume of fire you put out in the first 15 minutes of a fight is the most important. Our quick reactions really pulled us through that one."

An hour later the fight slacked off to sporadic sniper fire; enemy bodies surrounded the 3d/5th vehicles.

At the Air Force Base two companies of the 11st Airborne Division joined the Old Reliables to sweep wooded sections adjacent to a runway.

The 1st Platoon, using two APCs and the tank for its psychological value, came upon a small hamlet where the fourth fight occurred.

"There was fire from every building," said Specialist Four Richard M. Hobar, 19, of Jack-

son Heights, Queens, New York City." Platoon leader 1st Lieutenant Ernie Freeman, 23, of San Antonio, Tex., ordered his track crew to support the other track in trouble and rushed to the side of the platoon medic, who was helping the wounded.

"We put the wounded on my track," said Freeman, "and were about to pull back when the 2d Platoon arrived. They covered our withdrawal and shot up those Charlies pretty well." It was early evening and

Troop A was finished fighting for the day. The troop is credited with blunting the main VC thrust through the Bien Hoa area.

"The main thing that saved us," said Private First Class Donald W. Bador, 20, of Sacramento, Calif., "is that we kept firing and firing."

"My men are credited with killing 40 VC they actually saw fall," said Garretson, "but there is no telling how many they did not see fall."

# Troop C, ARVNs defend Xuan Loc

**XUAN LOC**—Two platoons of Troop C, 3d Squadron, 5th Cavalry, helped ARVN defenders to take control of this city on Feb. 2-3.

The 9th Division cavalrymen were called both days to aid a police station-government complex under intense ground attacks.

In the early hours of Feb. 2, the 1st and 2d platoons rode out of the MACV compound here on their "thunder mission." The 2d platoon's tank, commanded by Sergeant First Class Isaac Lane, 39, of Philadelphia, was leading.

"We were rolling through the center of town," said Lane, "when I spotted a VC in the gutter aiming an RPG-2 rocket at the tank's magazine. When he looked up and saw my 'grease gun' (M-3 sub-machinegun) and

our main gun trained at him, he shot wild."

At the same time, Lane fired accurately and killed the VC.

Suddenly every vehicle in the formation was unleashing fire as hordes of VC began appearing everywhere.

In an attempt to split the U.S. Armored Personnel Carriers in force, rockets also hit two mid-column. But the force ran the gamut of fire without losing a vehicle.

Minutes later, the column charged into the fight near the police station. It drove through the enemy attackers until reaching the rubber plantations at the border of the city. When they returned, the cavalry swept the outskirts of the city. At least 125 VC were killed throughout the fight for Xuan Loc.

Xuan Loc until the morning of 15 February when it marched back to Blackhorse and rejoined the squadron. Upon its relief the next morning the 5th Cavalry would be roadmarching back to Bearcat. And with the end of its participation in Operation Kittyhawk the 5th Cavalry was completing its final ground combat operation of the Vietnam War in the III Corps Tactical Zone. Because the squadron had been ordered by Headquarters, United States Army, Vietnam to deploy to I Corps.

The next morning the 5th Cavalry sat mounted waiting the arrival of the relieving 11th Cavalry squadron so the squadron could start its return roadmarch back to Bearcat. A Troop accompanied by C Troop's 2d Platoon had departed earlier in the morning heading for the Army's port facility, New Port, on the Saigon River outside Saigon for embarkation. For its transfer to I Corps the 5th Cavalry was going to be sealifted out of III Corps and moved north to Da Nang in central I Corps. While A Troop was marching directly to New Port the remainder of the squadron would be returning to Bearcat from where they would be called forward for embarkation from. As the 5th Cavalry ended its participation in Operation Kittyhawk so too did the over year long operation also end.

It was a clear cool morning as the relieving 1st Squadron, 11th Cavalry, returning to Blackhorse was greeted by enthusiastic, smiling-waving Red Cross Doughnut Dollies who stood by the gate through the birm oblivious to the swirling dust being kicked up by the passing tracked vehicles. Once the last 1st Squadron vehicle was inside the base camp the command was given for the 5th Cavalry to move out. And slowly the vehicles passed through the birm to an equally enthusiastic farewell from the Doughnut Dollies, and out onto Route 2, where for the final time the squadron turned north heading back to Bearcat.

Relieved and waiting at Tan Phong C Troop's 3d Platoon from Gia Ray fell into the passing column as it moved onto Highway 1. But back in Bien Hoa Province the roadmarch which up to then had been uneventful was mared when C Troop's 1st Platoon's, Infantry Section's APC unexplainably veered of the side of the highway and turned over killing its commander and driver plus injuring one crewman. Once the track was righted and the medical dust-off completed the vehicle continued onto Bearcat under its own power.

NOTES

1. At the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861 the mounted forces of the Regular Army consisted of six regiments [1st and 2d Dragoons; Regiment of Mounted Riflemen; 1st, 2d, and 3d Cavalry], still bearing their different names-dragoons, riflemen, and cavalry, and still considered three distinct arms. In August 1861 all six regular horse regiments were redesignated cavalry and numbered 1st through 6th in order, according to their respective dates of organization.
2. At the outbreak of the Spanish-American War Lee offered his services and was appointed a major general of volunteers. He commanded the VII Corps, intended but never required for combat in Cuba, and in January 1899 was made military governor of Havana and of Pinar del Rio Province. Lee was one of only three former Confederate generals [Lee, Joseph Wheeler, Thomas Rosser] to hold the rank during the war. In March 1899, under a new volunteer service act, he became brigadier general of volunteers, and he later commanded the Department of the Missouri for a time. He retired from the Army in March 1901.
3. Thomas was on a leave of absence from November 1860 until he returned to active duty as a lieutenant colonel in April 1861 and took command of Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania of the remains of his regiment. In May 1861 he was promoted to colonel of the 2d Cavalry.
4. On the morning of 21 July just before the start of the battle of Bull Run, Second Lieutenant George A. Custer joined the 2d Cavalry in the field, and as a member of Company G he took part in the fighting. While Custer would achieve high rank within the volunteer forces, he never rose above captain in the Regular Army.
5. The 9th Infantry Division's, Operational Report-Lessons Learned for quarterly period February 1966-January 1967, provided information on the division's activation and the events associated with it, through its arrival in Vietnam. Additional insight on the division's activation can be found in Major General William B. Fulton's, Vietnam Studies entitled: Riverine Operations 1966-1969.
6. The 9th Infantry Division's, Operational Report-Lessons Learned for quarterly period February-April 1967, states that the 15th Engineer Battalion was to have been supplemented by the 35th Engineer Battalion in November 1966, however, support of the engineer battalion was withdrawn prior to its arrival.
7. The organization of the 5th Cavalry was taken from the undated publication entitled: Fort Riley Kansas, The Story Of The 9th "The Old Reliables" Infantry Division.
8. Riverine Operations, 1966-1969, op. cit., provides insight into the basing of the 9th Infantry Division in Vietnam.
9. The 3d Marine Division also conducted an operation Hastings in 1966. The division's operation was conducted in northern Quang Tri Province by Task Force Delta between 15 July and 3 August 1966.
10. The southeast movement of the 5th Cavalry was stated in the 3d Brigade, 1st Infantry Division's, Operational Report-Lessons Learned for quarterly period February-April 1967. 2. Part II. Narrative of tactical operations: (2) Operation Tucson D [15-21 February 1967].
11. The identification of this fire support base was derived from the 1st Infantry Division's, Operational Report-Lessons Learned for quarterly period February-April 1967. D. Combat operations: Operation Junction City. This is in contradiction to General Roger's Vietnam Studies account of the battle I have used. In the July-August 1968 edition of

- ARMOR magazine First Lieutenant Roger A. Festa's article entitled: The Second Battle Of Ap Bau Bang appeared. This is the only known published account of the battle by one of its participants to appear since the battle. But there is no identification of the fire support base in his article.
12. Upon its arrival in Vietnam the 11th Armored Cavalry was stationed successively at Bien Hoa then Long Binh before moving to Blackhorse in February 1967.
  13. General O'Connor assumed command of the 9th Infantry Division on 1 June 1967.
  14. Composition of Task Force 3-5 Cavalry was not indicated in the scant information available on Operation Akron III in the 9th Infantry Division's, Operational Report-Lessons Learned for quarterly period August-October 1967.
  15. In Michael Mahler's book entitled: Ringed In Iron, the events leading up to the 31 December ambush are well chronicled. On 31 December then Major Mahler was the squadron's executive officer, thus making his reconstruction of the events leading up to the ambush highly informative. Therefore, I have drawn heavily from his account of the ambush. I also drew upon the Vietnam Studies entitled: Mounted Combat In Vietnam, and, 9th Infantry Division and 5th Cavalry, Operational Reports-Lessons Learned, for quarterly period November 1967-January 1968.
  16. No identification has been found for the Viet Cong unit responsible for the attack on Xuan Loc.

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Octofoil. 9th Infantry Division In Vietnam. Volume 2/April May June/Number 2  
9th Infantry Division 1918-1968  
9th Infantry Division Vietnam 1968: Combat Art Vietnam 1968

### Operational Records

#### Operational Reports-Lessons Learned

1st Infantry Division, Operational Report-Lessons Learned for quarterly period 1 February-30 April 1967  
9th Infantry Division, Operational Report-Lessons Learned for quarterly periods 1 February 1966-31 January 1967; 1 February-30 April 1967; 1 May-31 July 1967; 1 August-31 October 1967; 1 November 1967-31 January 1968; 1 February-30 April 1968  
3d Squadron, 5th Cavalry, Operational Report-Lessons Learned for quarterly periods 1 November 1967-31 January 1968 [earliest ORLL located]; 1 February-30 April 1968  
11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, Operational Report-Lessons Learned for quarterly period 1 May-31 July 1967. The use of regiment in its designation in Vietnam was unauthorized  
54th Artillery Group, Operational Report-Lessons Learned for quarterly periods 1 August-31 October 1967; 1 February-30 April 1968  
34th Engineer Group [Construction], Operational Report-Lessons Learned for quarterly period 1 November 1967-31 January 1968

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1st Brigade, 9th Infantry Division  
Operation Colby/Iola, dated 1 April 1967  
Operation Colby: 20-26 January 1967  
Operation Iola: 27-31 January 1967  
Operation Santa Fe I, II, III: 3 November 1967-5 January 1968, dated 20 January 1968  
Operation Akron V: 11-21 January 1968, dated 5 February 1968  
3d Squadron, 5th Cavalry  
Operation Paddington: 8-16 July 1967, dated 18 July 1967  
Operation Kittyhawk: 20 July-17 August 1967, dated 25 August 1967

### Non-Operational Records

3d Squadron, 5th Cavalry  
AGO Form 016 History Card

### Maps

In the preparation of this history I utilized primarily two official military maps to identify location names and to measure distances on.

Defense Mapping Agency. Selected L7014 1:50,000 scale topographical map sheets  
Special Southeast Asia Tactical VFR Charts. 1:500,000 scale, dated 12 October 1972, VFR charts 3 and 4 were utilized

-04-

As a secondary reference I used 1:150,000 scale maps of Bien Hoa, Long Khanh, and Phuoc Tuy Provinces. The maps were printed in 1971 by the National Geographic Directorate in Vietnam.

Vietnam Studies And Other Sources Of Maps Used In The History

Pg. 17      Airmobility 1961-1971  
Pg. 18      U.S. Army Engineers 1965-1970  
Pg. 21      Top: Riverine Operations 1966-1969. Bottom: derived from a map  
              in Mounted Combat In Vietnam  
Pg. 22      Author  
Pg. 25      Cedar Falls-Junction City: A Turing Point  
Pg. 26      Ibid.  
Pg. 30      Ibid.  
Pg. 37      Author  
Pg. 45      Author  
Pg. 46      11th Cavalry Veterans Of Vietnam And Cambodia newsletter  
Pg.63      Author

Telephone Conversations

Murphy, Colonel Ernest, USA [Ret.], Junction City, Kansas, 26 January 1990.  
Colonel Murphy was the chief of staff for both Fort Riley and the 9th Infantry Division before the staffs were seperated on 1 July 1967 by General Eckhardt. I discussed the formation of the 9th Infantry Division at Fort Riley with Colonel Murphy.

GLOSSARY

AAA: Antiaircraft artillery  
AO: Area of operation  
AW: Automatic weapons  
AIT: Advanced individual training  
APC: Armored Personnel carrier  
ATT: Army training test  
ACAV: Armored cavalry assault vehicle  
ARVN: Army of the Republic of Vietnam  
AVLB: Armored vehicle launched bridge  
BCT: Basic combat training  
CS: Riot control gas agent  
C7: Twin-engine, utility aircraft for short landing and take-offs, from unimproved landing areas  
CARS: Combat Arms Regimental System  
Class  
  I: Food  
  II: Clothing and equipment  
  III: Fuel  
  IV: Barrier and construction material  
  V: Ammunition  
CMMI: Command maintenance management inspection  
CONARC: Continental Army Command  
Eagle Flight: Airmobile force used to temporarily secure either a key piece of ground or on air or ground alert to perform rapid reaction force missions  
  
Engineers  
  Combat: Are equipped to perform area construction, obstacle preparation, demolition work, and to fight as infantry  
  Construction: Perform basic heavy construction tasks including construction of bases, structures, roads, bridges and pipelines, paving operations and construction of major facilities  
  
LRRP: Long range reconnaissance patrol  
LTL: Interprovincial route  
LZ: Landing zone  
[M]: Mechanized  
MACV: Military Assistance Command, Vietnam  
MEDCAP: Medical civic action program  
MTOE: Modified table of organization and equipment  
POW: Prisoner of war  
QL: National highway  
ROAD: Reorganized Army Objective Divisions  
RON: Remain overnight position  
SP: Self-propelled  
T: Towed  
TL: Provincial route  
TOE: Table of organization and equipment  
USARV: United States Army, Vietnam  
USNS: United States Naval Ship

ADDENDUM

EX:

Operations

Kien Giang 1-9: 64

Silver Lake: 20

Peneo, Specialist Fourth Class Allelardo: 34

OPERATION AKRON III:

Following the completion of this historical project in November 1992 additional information was received from Ron Quezada, President of the Black Knights, in the middle of December. Significant was a photocopy of the 9th Infantry Division, Volume 1, Number 42, of the Old Reliable newspaper, dated October 25, 1967. The newspaper contained significant information on the weapons cache that was discovered on 8 October 1967. The newspaper coverage fleshes out the division's operational report-lessons learned account of the operation and the weapons cache discovery. The newspaper accounts are must reading for those interested in the 3d Squadron's Vietnam War history as well as those who participated in operation Akron III itself.



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
**Lineage and Honors**

3d SQUADRON, 5th CAVALRY  
 (BLACK KNIGHTS)

Constituted 3 March 1855 as Company C, 2d Cavalry

Organized May - June 1855 at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Redesignated 3 August 1861 as Company C, 5th Cavalry

(Cavalry companies officially designated as troops in 1883)

(5th Cavalry assigned to 15th Cavalry Division December 1917 -  
 May 1918; assigned 18 December 1922 to 1st Cavalry Division. Dismounted  
 28 February 1943 and reorganized 4 December 1943 partly under cavalry  
 and partly under infantry tables of organization. Reorganized wholly  
 as infantry 20 July 1945 but retained cavalry designations)

Inactivated 1 February 1928 at Fort Clark, Texas

Activated 1 August 1940 at Fort Clark, Texas

Redesignated 25 March 1949 as Company C, 5th Cavalry

Inactivated 15 November 1957 in Japan

Redesignated 15 April 1958 as Headquarters and Headquarters Troop,  
 3d Reconnaissance Squadron, 5th Cavalry

Activated 1 July 1958 as an element of the 9th Infantry Division  
 at Fort Carson, Colorado (organic elements constituted 15 April 1958  
 and activated 1 July 1958 at Fort Carson, Colorado)

Inactivated 31 January 1962 at Fort Carson, Colorado

Activated 1 February 1966 at Fort Riley, Kansas; concurrently  
 redesignated as 3d Squadron, 5th Cavalry

*Incl 1*

3d SQUADRON, 5th CAVALRY  
(BLACK KNIGHTS)

CAMPAIGN PARTICIPATION CREDIT

Indian Wars

\*Comanches  
\*Apaches  
\*Little Big Horn  
Nez Perces  
Bannocks  
Cheyennes  
Utes  
\*Texas 1856  
Texas 1860  
Oklahoma 1858  
\*Oklahoma 1859  
\*Arizona 1872  
Arizona 1874

Civil War

Bull Run  
\*Peninsula  
\*Antietam  
\*Fredericksburg  
\*Chancellorsville  
\*Gettysburg  
\*Wilderness  
\*Spotsylvania  
\*Cold Harbor  
\*Petersburg  
\*Shenandoah  
\*Appomattox  
\*Virginia 1861  
\*Virginia 1862  
\*Virginia 1863  
\*Virginia 1864  
\*Maryland 1863

Philippine Insurrection

\*Without inscription

Mexican Expedition

Mexico 1916 - 1917

World War II

\*New Guinea  
\*Bismarck Archipelago  
(with arrowhead)  
\*Leyte (with arrowhead)  
\*Luzon

Korean War

\*UN defensive  
\*UN offensive  
\*CCF intervention  
\*First UN counteroffensive  
\*CCF spring offensive  
\*UN summer-fall offensive  
\*Second Korean winter  
\*Third Korean winter

Vietnam

\*Counteroffensive, Phase II  
\*Counteroffensive, Phase III  
\*Tet Counteroffensive  
\*Counteroffensive, Phase IV  
\*Counteroffensive, Phase V  
\*Counteroffensive, Phase VI  
\*Tet 69/Counteroffensive  
\*Summer-fall 1969  
\*Winter-spring 1970  
\*Sanctuary Counteroffensive  
\*Counteroffensive, Phase VII  
\*Consolidation I

3d SQUADRON, 5th CAVALRY  
(BLACK KNIGHTS)

DECORATIONS

- \*Presidential Unit Citation (Army), Streamer embroidered LOS NEGROS ISLAND
- \*Presidential Unit Citation (Army), Streamer embroidered DONG AP BIA MOUNTAIN
- \*Valorous Unit Award, Streamer embroidered QUANG TRI
- \*Philippine Presidential Unit Citation, Streamer embroidered 17 OCTOBER  
1944 TO 4 JULY 1945
- \*Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation, Streamer embroidered WAEGWAN-TAEGU
- \*Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation, Streamer embroidered KOREA
- \*Chryssoun Aristion Andrias (Bravery Gold Medal of Greece), Streamer  
embroidered KOREA
- \*Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm, Streamer embroidered VIETNAM 1966 - 1968
- \*Vietnamese Civil Action Honor Medal, First Class, Streamer embroidered VIETNAM  
1966 - 1968

Troop A additionally entitled to:

- Presidential Unit Citation (Army), Streamer embroidered AP BAU BANG
- Valorous Unit Award, Streamer embroidered BIEN HOA AIR BASE


Troop C additionally entitled to:

- Valorous Unit Award, Streamer embroidered XUAN LOC

Troop D additionally entitled to:

- Valorous Unit Award, Streamer embroidered SAIGON
- Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm, Streamer embroidered VIETNAM 1969
- Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm, Streamer embroidered VIETNAM  
1969 - 1970
- Vietnamese Civil Action Honor Medal, First Class, Streamer embroidered  
VIETNAM 1968 - 1969

BY ORDER OF THE SECRETARY OF THE ARMY:

  
VERNE L. BOWERS  
Major General, USA  
The Adjutant General

7 NOV 1973

GENERAL ORDERS

Office of the Chief

HEADQUARTERS  
DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
WASHINGTON, D.C., 10 January 1969

No. 3

PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION—Award.....	Section I
VALOROUS UNIT AWARD—Award.....	II
MERITORIOUS UNIT COMMENDATION—Award.....	III

**I. THE PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION (ARMY).** Award of the Presidential Unit Citation (Army) by the President of the United States of America to the following unit of the Armed Forces of the United States is confirmed in accordance with paragraph 194, AR 672-5-1. The text of the citation, signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson, 3 December 1968, reads as follows:

By virtue of the authority vested in me as President of the United States and as Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces of the United States I have today awarded the Presidential Unit Citation (Army) for extraordinary heroism to:

TROOP A, 3D SQUADRON, 5TH CAVALRY

X 1ST PLATOON, TROOP B, 3D SQUADRON, 5TH CAVALRY

X 3D PLATOON, TROOP C, 3D SQUADRON, 5TH CAVALRY

X HEADQUARTERS SECTION, HEADQUARTERS TROOP,  
3D SQUADRON, 5TH CAVALRY

X GROUND SURVEILLANCE SECTION, HEADQUARTERS TROOP,  
3D SQUADRON, 5TH CAVALRY

X MEDICAL PLATOON, HEADQUARTERS TROOP, 3D SQUADRON,  
5TH CAVALRY, OF THE 9TH INFANTRY DIVISION

AND TO

BATTERY B, 7TH BATTALION, 99TH ARTILLERY

UNITED STATES ARMY

The foregoing units distinguished themselves by gallantry in action while engaged in military operations against a heavily armed enemy on the night of 19-20 March 1967 in the second battle of Ap Bau Bang, Republic of Vietnam. Although initially outnumbered more than ten to one and completely surrounded, Troop A tenaciously contained the fierce Viet Cong attack. As the enemy pressed its coordinated attack with mortars, automatic weapons, recoilless rifles and anti-tank rockets, the courageous defenders of the artillery fire support base at Ap Bau Bang sustained many direct hits on their combat vehicles, destroying two of the vehicles and wounding over half the troopers. With dauntless courage, ignoring their wounds, they struck back at the fanatical enemy, breaking up the enemy's repeated assaults. In violently executed moves, the besieged Troop A perimeter was reinforced by elements of Troop B, C, and Headquarters Troop, to relieve pressure on the defenders and destroy the Viet Cong forces. As the armored reinforcing columns raced to the battle area, they broke through the Viet Cong ambushes prepared for them, continued on to the



GO 3

embattled perimeter under intense fire, charged through the heavy enemy concentrations, and accomplished the first successful night reinforcement by armored units of a perimeter under heavy Viet Cong attack in the Vietnamese conflict. Massed fires of the cavalrymen and supporting artillery, armed helicopters, and tactical air fires poured into the enemy masses, as the troopers conducted successive counterattacks to complete the rout of the 273d Viet Cong Regiment. As dawn broke, after the 6-hour battle, enemy dead covered the battlefield. The indomitable fighting spirit and gallantry of the cavalry troopers achieved a signal victory at Ap Bau Bang which contributed significantly to the success of Operation Junction City in the Vietnamese campaign. The gallantry and heroism of the troopers was in keeping with the highest traditions of the cavalry and the United States Army.

**II. VALOROUS UNIT AWARD.** By direction of the Secretary of the Army, under the provisions of paragraph 202.1, AR 672-5-1, the Valorous Unit Award is awarded the following unit of the Republic of Vietnam for extraordinary heroism while engaged in military operations during the period indicated:

The citation reads as follows:  
 The Valorous Unit Award is awarded by direction of the Secretary of the Army to:

**THE 43D RANGER BATTALION**

for extraordinary heroism:

The 43d Ranger Battalion distinguished itself by extraordinary heroism while engaged in military operations against the Viet Cong on Operation LONG PHI 955, on the 11th and 12th of February 1966, in the Republic of Vietnam. While acting as the Reserve Force of the 9th Infantry Division, Army of the Republic of Vietnam, the 43d Ranger Battalion was committed at 1200 hours on the 11th of February to relieve the 2d Battalion of the 15th Infantry Regiment and the 2d and 3d Troops of the 2d Armored Cavalry Squadron which were pinned down and receiving heavy casualties. At 1215 hours, the commander of the Ranger Battalion called for air strikes and artillery support and attempted to organize a coordinated attack with the 15th Infantry Regiment and the 2d Armored Cavalry Squadron; however, after the artillery and air cover was lifted, the Viet Cong fire was just as intense, and it was apparent to the Ranger Battalion Commander that there was not enough time to launch a completely coordinated attack. He ordered the 43d Rangers to advance on their own. The attack was led by the 4th Ranger Company which penetrated the enemy position, the 2d Ranger Company was immediately ordered to reinforce the 4th Ranger Company, and the 1st Ranger Company was ordered to flank the enemy's position on the east to relieve the pressure on the 4th and 2d Ranger Companies. When the 4th Company reported that they had captured a 75mm Recoilless Rifle, the Battalion Commander knew that they were facing a much stronger enemy than was estimated. When the 2d Ranger Company also reported capturing a 75mm Recoilless Rifle, the 43d Ranger Battalion was obviously facing a reinforced main force Viet Cong Battalion, armed with the latest model weapons and deeply entrenched in well-prepared defensive positions. At this time the magnitude of the operation became apparent. The 3d Ranger Company, which had been sent to reinforce the 2d Armored Cavalry and attack the west flank, had taken heavy losses; however, they had succeeded

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developed a major portion of all targets successfully destroyed by the Division throughout the period. The aggressiveness, determination, enthusiasm, and exemplary courage under fire demonstrated by all members of the 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry, reflect great credit on the organization and stand in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service.

**II. VALOROUS UNIT AWARD.** By direction of the Secretary of the Army, under the provisions of paragraph 202.1, AR 672-5-1, the Valorous Unit Award is awarded the following-named units of the United States Army for extraordinary heroism while engaged in military operations during the periods indicated:

The citations read as follows:

*1/14*  
1. TROOP A, 3D SQUADRON, 5TH CAVALRY.

TROOP A, 3D SQUADRON, 5TH CAVALRY distinguished itself by extraordinary heroism while engaged in military operations on 31 January 1968 in defense of the Bien Hoa Air Base in the Republic of Vietnam. Given the extremely hazardous mission of traveling along enemy infested Highway 1 to the besieged airfield, the cavalrymen were the object of three well-coordinated and effectively executed enemy ambushes along the route. The determined Viet Cong assailants directed deadly fires of antitank rockets, automatic weapons and small arms at the troopers from point blank range. With indomitable courage and relentless determination, the Black Knights repelled all attacks by saturating the area with devastating machinegun, grenade and rifle fire. When the men of TROOP A, 3D SQUADRON, 5TH CAVALRY reached their final objective, they moved out on a sweep of the area. A short time later, they clashed with two reinforced companies of Viet Cong and, although fighting against seemingly insurmountable odds, the troopers refused to leave their positions, swerving perseverance, exemplary bravery and tactical proficiency, the troop's members contributed immeasurably to the successful defense of the Bien Hoa Air Base. The men of TROOP A, 3D SQUADRON, 5TH CAVALRY displayed extraordinary heroism and devotion to duty which are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect distinct credit upon themselves and the Armed Forces of the United States.

2. THE 4TH BATTALION, 31ST INFANTRY, 196TH LIGHT INFANTRY BRIGADE, AMERICAL DIVISION.

The 4TH BATTALION, 31ST INFANTRY, 196TH LIGHT INFANTRY BRIGADE, AMERICAL DIVISION distinguished itself by extraordinary heroism while engaged in military operations during the period 15 November 1967 to 3 February 1968 in the Que Son and Hiep Duc Districts of the Republic of Vietnam. Initially participating in Operation WHEELER/WALLOWA in the Que Son District, the battalion's personnel demonstrated exemplary courage and relentless determination in conducting highly successful search, destroy and interdiction missions. On 22 November 1967, they were committed to an assault upon a large North Vietnamese Army force in the vicinity of the Dong Son hamlet. Because of the voluminous firepower and aggressiveness of the unit's members during three consecutive days of fierce fighting, the enemy was forced to break contact and the battle was held as an overwhelming victory for the fighting men of the 4TH BATTALION, 31ST INFANTRY, 196TH LIGHT INFANTRY BRIGADE, AMERICAL DIVISION. Subsequently operating in the Hiep Duc District, the battalion's mem-

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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
HEADQUARTERS, UNITED STATES ARMY VIETNAM  
APO San Francisco 96375GENERAL ORDERS  
NUMBER 5496

29 November 1968

VALOROUS UNIT AWARD

1. TC 320. The following AWARD is announced.

By direction of the Secretary of the Army, under the provisions of paragraph 202.1g(2), AR 672-5-1, the Valorous Unit Award is awarded the following named unit of the United States Army for extraordinary heroism while engaged in military operations during the period indicated:

The citation reads as follows:

TROOP C, 3D SQUADRON, 5TH CAVALRY, 9TH INFANTRY DIVISION distinguished itself by extraordinary heroism while engaged in military operations on 2 and 3 February 1968 in defense of Xuan Loc, the Provincial Capitol of Long Khanh Province in the Republic of Vietnam. When the enemy launched a three pronged attack against the city of Xuan Loc during the joint North Vietnamese/Viet Cong TET Offensive, the troop was deployed to the police station which was bearing the brunt of the assault. While traveling along the city's streets, lethal volleys of enemy fire rained upon the entire armored column. Unable to utilize their mounted weapons because of the narrowness of the roads, the undaunted members of TROOP C, 3D SQUADRON, 5TH CAVALRY, 9TH INFANTRY DIVISION fought tenaciously with their personal weapons and reached their objective without losing a single vehicle. They demonstrated exemplary courage and steadfast determination in driving the enemy force from the station before the communists could inflict many casualties upon the Army of the Republic of Vietnam soldiers. The cavalymen regrouped and set up three strong points, at the north and south gates and in the center of the city. When the assailants attacked again, the fearless troopers saturated the area with a devastating volume of suppressive fire, driving the foe from the battlefield and wreaking death and destruction among the enemy's ranks. Through their relentless perseverance, singular bravery and tactical proficiency, the troop's members were instrumental in the successful defense of the city of Xuan Loc. The men of TROOP C, 3D SQUADRON, 5TH CAVALRY, 9TH INFANTRY DIVISION displayed extraordinary heroism and devotion to duty which are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect distinct credit upon themselves and the Armed Forces of the United States.

*Encl 2*

GENERAL ORDERS NUMBER 5496, dated 29 November 1968, DA, HEADQUARTERS  
UNITED STATES ARMY VIETNAM, APO San Francisco 96375 (Cont)

FOR THE COMMANDER:



LEO R. JONES  
Brigadier General, US Army  
Chief of Staff

CARL V. CASH  
Colonel, AGC  
Adjutant General

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