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Authority **AWO 873541**
By **JPA** NARA Date **11/6/98**

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AVDE-BCO 30 April 1968
SUBJECT: Operational Report for Quarterly Period Ending 30 April 1968
(RCS/CSFOR-65 R-1)(U)

e. Operation TOAN THANG was implemented by brigade on 8 April 1968 to complete the destruction of company and battalion size VC/NVA forces that remained in the CMD area and to interdict and block those enemy supply lines and infiltration routes that led from Long An Province to the Saigon area. Recurring missions assigned to brigade units continued. The one company of 5-60 Inf under bde control was employed as Bde RRF nightly (co.-) with one platoon located on the Ben Luc Bridge to reinforce ARVN security elements. In addition the co conducted convoy escort missions on highway QL 4 and provided daily security for interdistrict road clearing teams. The one company from 2-60 Inf under bde control continued Tan Tru basecamp security and conducted local operations. The 3-39 Inf continued security of designated basecamps and conducted limited combat operations within the bde AO. The 2-3 Inf continued operations in Binh Chanh District from its two FS/PB's and intensified efforts to destroy VC/NVA forces and prevent enemy retraining and recruitment activities. The 4-39 Inf remained at Nha Be and continued the security mission at Cat Lai with one company while increasing interdiction operations along major waterways in the district. Operation TOAN THANG marked what appeared to be an attempt by the enemy to conduct a general buildup and reorganization of the forces that had moved into the CMD area after the Saigon attacks. The brigade reacted to this attempt with every resource available to it, including the use of TPS-25 ground surveillance radar and air cavalry troops in addition to techniques that had proven reliable during previous operations. The concentration of enemy forces was noticeable not only in CMD but also in Long An Province particularly in Tan Tru and Ben Luc Districts. Brigade units established contact frequently with sizeable enemy forces that displayed the same renewed offensive spirit so prevalent throughout the TET Offensive. Early in the operation the Bde CP (Fwd) moved to Nha Be to control a series of continuous combined offensive operations to locate and destroy VC/NVA forces and facilities in Nha Be and eastern Binh Chanh Districts. The scope of these operations included all of Nha Be District and that portion of Binh Chanh District east of the Can Giuoc River. Vietnamese forces that participated in the operations included the 1st Marine Task Force, 5th Ranger Group, and Nha Be RF/PF units. In addition the 46th Regt (ARVN) conducted operations in close coordination and cooperation to locate, destroy, and block enemy forces in Can Giuoc District with emphasis on the Long An - Gia Dinh Province boundary. The first day's operations, conducted by 2-3 and 4-39 with D/3-5 Cav screening forward of ground elements, produced no significant results. Operations continued on the following day with the 3-39 Inf added to the maneuver forces. The 4-39 Inf established contact with an unknown size enemy force which resulted in 6 VC KIA, 6 AK-47's captured, and 44 bunkers destroyed. The third day's operations produced insignificant results as units completed clearing assigned objectives and the bde tactical-CP returned to Tan An the next morning. A team from the brigade remained in Nha Be to conduct a survey of RF/PF outposts and provide necessary support to accomplish upgrading.

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The brigade began to experience heavier contacts with the resumption of intensified combat operations in Long An Province. On 13 April 1968, the 3-39 Inf with C/7-1 Cav supporting established contact with enemy forces in the Mouse Ears area of Tan Tru District (XS 6859) which resulted in seventeen VC KIA (BC). The objective area had been selected from sightings obtained by radar emplaced at the 2-60 Inf's combat base at Tan Tru. The 3-39 Inf established a Bn Field CP in the area and remained overnight. Operations conducted the following day, using D/3-5 Cav in areas where radar sightings were obtained, resulted in the destruction of a large bunker complex of over 200 one to two-man bunkers which were recently built. Operations based on the use of radar continued in the Nhut Ninh (XS 682594) and Thuan My (XS 713557) areas through 17 April 1968. The evaluation of operations with the TPS-25 radar conducted by the 3-39 Inf and D/3-5 Cav in support indicated that the concept is sound providing certain principles are followed regarding the size and location of friendly forces and the method of intercepting enemy forces on the move. The optimum size unit appears to be a company operating from a field base and establishing ambush locations along routes identified by the radar. On 18 April 1968, the remaining company of 2-60 Inf was placed OPCON to 1st Brigade completing the transfer of the Bn to 1st Brigade control. The 4-39 Inf occupied the combat base at Tan Tru. On 19 April 1968, 5-60 Inf (M)(-) returned to bde control with one company and the scout platoon remaining OPCON to 1st Brigade. Significant contacts in Long An Province continued to be established particularly on combined operations. The 2-3 Inf, reacting to contact established by ARVN north of Ben Luc, located a large bunker complex with over 500 bunkers, some reinforced with steel and concrete, and a partially completed bn size basecamp on 17 April 1968. On 20 April 1968, D/3-5 Cav, 3-39 Inf, and two RF companies from Rach Kien reacted to an intelligence report in the vicinity of My Le (XS 7566) and established contact with an enemy force later identified as the 315th LF Co. Seventeen enemy were killed by US elements and nine VC KIA's were credited to the RF companies. The Rach Kien District Chief died of wounds received during the action. The most significant contact of Operation TOAN THANG occurred on 22 April 1968 when D/3-5 Cav inserted its infantry element in northern Tan Tru District. The platoon was immediately engaged by an estimated three VC squads firing small arms, automatic weapons, and 12.7 machineguns. LFT's and fighter aircraft received heavy AW fire which resulted in one fighter hit but not downed, one helicopter forced to land at Tan An Airfield, and several helicopter crew members WIA. A tactical emergency was declared at 1830H when the size of the enemy force was placed at a battalion or larger. The 5th Bn, 60th Inf moved to the area of contact by organic APC's and elements of 2-3 Inf and 4-39 Inf conducted a night airmobile insertion into the area. Under a heavy smoke screen established by artillery, D/3-5 extracted its infantry platoon. The squad establishing initial contact sustained one-hundred per cent casualties (6 KIA). All units employed in the operation established

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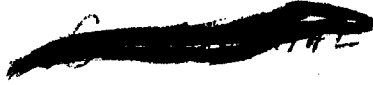
heavy contact with the enemy and follow-up operations the next day indicated the enemy had engaged brigade units from well-constructed "L"-shaped bunkers. On 25 April 1968, D/3-5 Cav again established heavy contact while supporting 2-3 Inf in Binh Chanh District west of the Can Giuoc River (XS 7779). After insertion the infantry platoon was met with heavy AW and SA fire from a bunker complex approximately 300 meters long. The unit was reinforced by 2-3 Inf and contact was broken resulting in six WIA and two KIA from D/3-5 Cav and six WIA and two DOW from 2-3 Inf. The 6th Bn, 31st Inf was placed OPCON to the bde on 27 April 1968 and was assigned a temporary AO in the vicinity of Binh Chanh. The unit will be employed as a RRF in the CMD or Long An AO's and will conduct maximum interdiction operations. The Long An - GMD boundary area continued to produce significant contacts and on 27 April 1968 the 2-3 Inf engaged a reinforced platoon vic XS 783745 which had opened up on them at a distance of 10-15 meters from a bunker complex shaped like a wagon wheel. The area was sealed off with two companies and an armored cav plt and the contact resulted in fourteen VC KIA, four RPG-2 launchers, one RPD-56 MG, four AK-47's and one US carbine captured. Five US KIA and none WIA were sustained by the 2-3 Inf with the majority taken in the initial stages of contact. Operation TOAN THANG has underscored the enemy's change in tactics most forcibly demonstrated by his selection of bunker sites forward of tree lines to avoid friendly supporting fires and his reluctance to establish contact with friendly units until they have entered his position and can be fired upon from three sides. Brigade units are rapidly adjusting to these techniques as the operations continue. Results to date are indicated below:

(1) Enemy personnel losses:

VC KIA (BC) - 116
POW - 5

(2) Enemy equipment losses:

Small Arms - 28
Crew-served Weapons - 8
Mines/Booby Traps - 14
Rice - 3 1/2 tons
Sampans - 69
Bunkers - 1058
Grenades - 364
81/82mm mortar rounds - 35
75mm recoilless rifle rounds - 0
60mm mortar rounds - 16
Small Arms rounds - 1095
Medical Supplies - 7 lbs
Documents - 10 lbs



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general well being and prosperity. Of note in this vein were the dangers risked by an elderly couple living in close proximity to the highway. A 9th Inf Div company was engaged in a fierce firefight several hundred yards from their home. An infantryman was badly wounded yet managed to make it to their home. The couple took him in and hid him, assisting him as well as they could and risking their lives by doing so. Later after the battle was over and an element was searching the vicinity, they openly approached the element commander and led him to their house where the man was hid.

(1) Operation TOAN THANG (8 Apr 68 to date): The 9th Inf Div participates in this operation which includes all US/PWMAF/GVN units in the area surrounding Saigon as a follow up to Operation QUYET THANG. The operation is aimed at the location and destruction of VC/NVA elements of the 5th VC Div and VC Sub-Regions 2, 3, and 4 in the division TAOI and also the interdiction of VC/NVA LOC into the Saigon area. The Royal Thai Army Volunteer Regiment (RTAVR) and Task Force Forayth with the 2-47 Inf (M) and the 6-31 Inf conducted operations in coordination and cooperation with the 18th Inf Div (ARVN) in Nhon Traoh and Long Thanh Districts, Bien Hoa Province and western Xuan Loc District, Long Khanh Province. The 3d Bde with the 4-39 Inf and 2-3 Inf (199th LTB) in the Nha Be and Binh Chanh Districts, Gia Dinh Province and with the 3-39 Inf and 5-60 Inf (M) in Long An Province conducted operations in coordination and cooperation with the 25th Inf Div (ARVN) and other ARVN, Ranger, and Marine elements. All 9th Inf Div elements worked closely with local HF/PF units and the national police. Significant tactical techniques employed, especially by the 3d Bde forces, have been the extensive use of artillery radars (AN/TFS-25) to detect large scale enemy movements to identify enemy LOC, and the "Aquabush" or night ambush patrols on water LOC leading into Saigon. Throughout most of this operation, enemy contact has been limited to squad or platoon size encounters. From 8 - 20 Apr there were no significant contacts established by elements of the 9th Inf Div participating in this operation; only sporadic and light contact was established resulting in 5 US KIA, 28 NVA and 71 VC/NVA KIA. On 22 Apr D/3-5 Cav, the Air Cav Troop, conducted aerial recon and airmobile assaults in northern Tan Tru District, vic XS 604704. D Troop inserted its Aero Rifle Platoon (ARP) in the afternoon which became immediately heavily engaged with an estimated enemy battalion and sustained heavy casualties. LFT's and fighters supporting the contact received heavy AV fire resulting in damage to several helicopters. A tactical emergency was declared at 1830H. Elements of the 5-60 Inf (M) moved by APC to support the contact, while elements of 2-3 Inf, 3-39 Inf, and 4-39 Inf conducted night airmobile insertions into the area. All units were engaged in heavy contact.

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In the early morning hours of 23 Apr, the ARP was extracted under a heavy smoke screen created by artillery. The squad establishing initial contact suffered 100% killed (6 KHA) after it had advanced to within 30 meters of the enemy bunkers before receiving fire. D/3-5 Cav was credited with 35 enemy KIA. The enemy dead were found wearing blue uniforms and steel helmets indicating NVA troops. On 24 Apr TF Tower with the 2-47 Inf (M) and 6-31 Inf in coordination with the 1st ATF conducted a spoiling attack aimed at a reported NVA artillery battalion in the Hot Dich area of Bien Hoa and Long Khanh Provinces. This operation continued with negligible contact until 26 Apr. On 27 Apr the 6-31 Inf became OPCON to the 3d Bde to act as a mobile reaction force in southern Gia Dinh and northern Long An Provinces. On 30 Apr 3-11 ACR and B/7-1 Air Cav became OPCON to 3d Bde to increase the protection of the southern flank of Saigon in Gia Dinh and Long An Provinces in anticipation of renewed VC/NVA attacks. The measure of success of Operation TOAN THANG is that up to the end of the quarter, the enemy had not been able to renew his offensive attacks against Saigon despite rumors and intelligence reports that such attacks had been planned. Results for 9th Inf Div units for the quarter were: 183 VC/NVA KIA, 4 POW, 11 C/S weapons and 42 SA captured; 25 US KHA, 97 US WHA (49 evac), 1 MHA and RTAVR 1 WHA. (See Inclosure 12, 3d Bde ORLL.)

(7) Combat Support Activities.

(a) Artillery Support.

1 Several firing batteries and battalions of artillery with the 9th Inf Div were required to operate both in the rugged jungle terrain of the Bien Hoa Province and in the rice-paddies of the Mekong Delta. Timely and continuous fire support was provided to divisional elements, Army of the Republic of Vietnam units, and Regional Force/Popular Force Outposts. Twelve firing batteries from II Field Forces Vietnam Artillery were used at various times throughout the quarter to supplement the fires of 9th Div Arty units, primarily because of the large Tactical Area of Responsibility of this division.

2 Artillery with 9th Inf Div fired a total of 313,660 105 rounds, 87,402 155 rounds, and 8,953 8 inch rounds during this quarter in support of division operations. These figures do not reflect support from adjacent firing elements as figures were not obtainable for those fires. A chart reflecting a breakdown of rounds fired by artillery with the division is attached as Inclosure 6. Reference also 9th Inf Div Artillery Operation Report-Lessons Learned for the period 1 Feb - 30 Apr 68 which

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companies be made aware of this technique.

(7) RRF on Strip Alert When Supported by Air Cavalry Troop.

OBSERVATION. It is imperative to have at least a company size rapid reaction force (RRF) on strip alert when supported by an air cavalry troop.

EVALUATION. Unless at least a company size force is on strip alert, the opportunities afforded to a brigade or battalion by an air cavalry troop cannot be fully exploited. The first element to be committed will be the aero rifle platoon, organic to the air cavalry troop. If a significant contact is established and a sizeable reaction force is not available, the troop commander has no alternative but to extract. These circumstances result in the wasteful loss of a lucrative target.

RECOMMENDATION: That all units retain a rifle company on strip alert whenever supported by or supporting an air cavalry troop.

(8) Secure Communications on Operations Keyed to Fresh Intelligence.

OBSERVATION. Operations keyed on intelligence not more than 24 hours old require constant "secure" communications with maneuver battalions.

EVALUATION. Reacting to intelligence reports or sightings generated during the previous 24 hours requires that the assets available, nature of the target, and command guidance be transmitted by secure means. This is often necessary during the hours of darkness when courier aircraft are not available. Plans must be transmitted back to the brigade headquarters to facilitate further support coordination. These transmissions could compromise the entire operation if not handled on secure communications.

RECOMMENDATION. It is recommended that all commanders recognize the importance of and utilize secure communications to discuss and confirm their 24 hour cycle operations. Command emphasis must be placed on the installation, maintenance, and utilization of secure voice communications if its real value is ever to be recognized and fully exploited.

(9) Use of CS Against Bunkers.

OBSERVATION. Employment of CS against fortified fighting positions caused the enemy to abandon the positions and expose himself to friendly fires.

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