



## The Battle of **BAU BANG**

By 2LT Charles C Ashton III

The glow of tracers from a Viet Cong machine gun illuminated the last hour of Palm Sunday March 19, 1967, as the Battle of Bau Bang erupted in what was to be a furious six-hour ordeal.

By sunrise, 230 bodies from the 273rd Viet Cong Main Force Regiment would cover the pockmarked, brass-laden battlefield.

Three missions were assigned to the 3rd Squadron, 5th Cavalry, 9th Infantry Division: Clear and secure highway 13 from Lai Khe to Cau Xe Lu'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.

For these tasks the 3rd/5th was attached to the 1st Brigade, participating in Phase II of Operation JUNCTION CITY, a security mission along Highway 13.

Troop A, 3rd/5th, was to secure Combat Outpost 3 and the fire support base where Battery B, 7th Battalion, 9th Artillery was deployed. Troop B, 3rd/5th was to defend troop base,

Combat Outposts 1 and 2 as well as

Observation Posts 1, 2 and 3. Troop C, 3rd/5th would occupy the troop base. Headquarters troop would man the Squadron Command Post; and occupy Combat Outpost 4, augmented by two tanks from Troop A.

By 7 p.m. all elements of the Squadron had occupied their assigned defensive positions and outposts. As the elements of Combat Outpost 4 were closing into position, a Viet Cong guerilla was killed attempting to place a large anti-tank mine in the road. Having compromised their position, the unit returned to the Squadron Command Post, and Troop A's tanks returned to the fire support base.

At 11 p.m. 15 cattle were observed northeast of Troop A's perimeter at the fire support base. Sergeant Michael Rorie, Marshville, N.C., was being relieved from guard when he heard bells and saw cattle cross the road in front of his armored cavalry assault vehicle (ACAV). Moments later, an enemy machine gun opened up. The driver immediately returned

fire and together with a tank's main gun, destroyed the position.