

HEADQUARTERS 1ST BATTALION 12TH INFANTRY
2d Brigade 4th Infantry Division
APO San Francisco 96262

AVDDB-12I

1 May 1968

SUBJECT: Operational Report for Quarterly Period Ending 30 April 1968

Commanding Officer
2d Brigade, 4th Infantry Division
ATTN: AVDDB-C
APO San Francisco 96262

Section I: Significant Organization or Unit Activities

1. General: During the reporting period the "Red Warriors" conducted continuous search and destroy operations against various NVA/VC/VMC units. For reporting purposes operations during this period can be categorized into three phases. During Phase I (1 Feb - 2 Mar) operations were conducted exclusively against NVA forces in the Dak To area. Phase II operations (2 Mar - 22 Apr) were conducted against combined NVA/VC/VMC forces in the Ban Me Thuot/Mewal area. Phase III operations (23 Apr - 30 Apr) were conducted in the Polei Kleng area primarily against NVA/VC units.

2. Intelligence: Primary sources of intelligence information during Phase E were reports, documents and POWs taken by maneuver elements, attached and OPCON surveillance units (LRRPs) and reports from higher headquarters sources (APD readings, agent reports etc). Intelligence reports during this Phase indicated that large scale infiltration was taking place throughout the area and that an attempt was being made to mass a large unit capable of conducting an attack against the military installation at Dak To.

During Phase II in addition to the intelligence sources mentioned above, a great deal of information was gained from ARVN sources at 23d ARVN Division Headquarters. Indicators from these sources were that increased NVA/VC activities and increased infiltration of men and supplies would lead to another large scale attack on military installation in and around the city of Ban Me Thuot.

Intelligence sources during Phase III (22 Apr - 30 Apr) were the same as those in Phase I. Indicators during this phase were also of increased infiltration of men and material through the area of Polei Kleng.

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3. Operations and Training Activities.

a. Plans: During Phase I the battalion's mission was to conduct search and destroy operations in its assigned AO, to prevent or lessen the amount of infiltration taking place in its AO, and to establish contact with any enemy forces located in that area.

The battalion mission during Phase II was to conduct search and destroy operations north of Ban Me Thuot, disrupt supply routes, prevent further infiltration and consolidation, locate and destroy existing enemy units and to be prepared to reinforce Ban Me Thuot City should an attack take place.

During Phase III the battalion mission was to conduct search and destroy operations in the Polei Kleng area, deny the enemy infiltration and access routes by which he was resupplying units in the Kontum area, search out and destroy enemy base camp areas in the vicinity and reinforce the Polei Kleng area.

b. Operations: On 1 February 1968 the battalion FSB was located at FB 24, YB 911121 with B/4/42 Artillery in (DS) and Company D providing FSB security. Company A, Company B and the Reconnaissance Platoon were conducting search and destroy operations to the south of the FSB and Company C was providing perimeter security at Dak To.

On 3 February at 1817 hours, Dak To received a 122mm rocket attack which resulted in Company C receiving 4 KIA and 7 WIA. The following day Company C was air lifted to the FSB.

On 6 February Company A was air lifted to Kontum to support activities of the 1st Battalion, 22d Infantry which was operating in that area.

On 8 February Company A, while OPCON to the 1/22d and operating in the Kontum area made contact with an estimated NVA Company while conducting search and destroy operations north of the city. The company assaulted the dug in enemy positions twice in an attempt to overrun them but was repulsed both times by intense small arms and machine gun fire. The company then withdrew a short distance and set up a night defensive position. The results of the days contact were 3 KIA and 21 WIA.

At 1200 hours on the same day Company C was air lifted to Kontum, also to support the 1/22 operations. Company C moved from the city and joined Company A in their night location at 2030 hours. After a short pause to organize, Company C conducted a night assault on the objective. The objective was taken at 2230 hours after heavy air and artillery preparation with negative contact. On the same day the FSB received an extensive B40 rocket and mortar attack that resulted in 1 KIA and 7 WIA.

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On 10 February while continuing search and destroy operations north of Kontum, Company C made contact with an estimated NVA Company at 1745 hours. The company tried twice to maneuver against the positions but was forced to withdraw both times by intense small arms, machine gun, rifle grenade and B-40 rocket fire. Due to the time the company moved back and established a night defensive position. Throughout the night an extensive H&I program was fired on the enemy position and an air strike and artillery preparation were put in the area at first light. The company again assaulted the enemy positions and was again repulsed suffering a total of 3 KIA and 20 WIA for the two day operation. Later that day Company A and Company C were replaced by B Company 1st Battalion, 22d Infantry and were air lifted back to Dak To.

On 11 February the battalion FSB also displaced by air to FB 6, YB 934188. On 12 February while conducting search and destroy operations northwest of Dak To Company B made contact with a delay force. The enemy position consisted of mutually supporting machinegun bunkers which had to be taken one at a time. This action resulted in 1 US KIA and 21 WIA. After extensive use of air and artillery a sweep of the contact area produced 9 NVA bodies, 1 30 caliber machinegun on wheels and 1 AK-47.

On 21 February Company A made contact with an enemy force of unknown size which resulted in 2 US WIA and 5 NVA KIA. Equipment captured as a result of the contact was 25 75mm rounds, 93 82mm rounds, 5 fuse kits, 1 AK-47 and 5 Chicom grenades.

On 23 February a four man patrol from Company D made contact with 4 NVA, two of which were killed and 2 AK-47s captured.

On 26 February the battalion FSB displaced by air to FB 30, YB 971267. On 1 March the Phase I operations came to an end with the battalion convoy move to Pleiku.

Phase II operations began on 2 March with the convoy of Task Force 12 from Pleiku to the new battalion FSB location at AQ936283. The TF consisted of 1/12(-), C/3/6 Arty, B/5/16 Arty, c/7/15 Arty, B(-)/1/69 Armor, B/1/10 Cav, 630 Eng Det, 124 Sig Det, 704 Maint Det, 1st Plat 20 Inf LRRPs and Conway Shapper Mike Force Co.

Upon establishing the FSB D Co and C Co provided security until they were replaced by A Co and B Co which arrived from Dak To by C-130 on 4 March. On 9 March D Co made the initial contact of the Phase, firing on six individuals with negative results.

On the same day B/5/16 Arty displaced to a hip shoot location at AQ896253 to support a CA in conjunction with a coordinated US-ARVN operation. The CA was later aborted because of a change in ARVN mission.

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On 12 March LRRP Team 36 at AQ883364 found a weapons cache that consisted of 2 RPD's, 3 Chicom carbines w/grenade launchers, 1 AK-47, 4 RPD ammo drums and 5 rifle grenades.

On 13 March the battalion FSB displaced in a two part, two day move by air and convoy to AQ829100 to be in a better position to support a US-ARVN operation from 15-25 March. On 14 March Mobile Strike Force, 21st Company received 82mm mortar fire and a ground attack at its night location north of the FSB. The next morning the Company made contact twice with small enemy units. The result of the two days activities were 1 NVA KIA, 1 MF WIA and 1 AK-47 CIA.

On 15 March while proceeding toward the FSB MSF 21d Company made contact with three small units with negative results.

On 21 March the major contact of the phase took place between A Co C Co and D Co and NVA battalion. A Co, acting as the point element of a three company sweep, made contact with the left flank of the moving NVA element. Heavy contact resulted in which air and artillery were both used extensively. The results of the contact were 7 US KIA and 23 US WIA, 41 NVA KIA and 2 NVA POWs. Equipment captured in the battle was 4 RPDs, 3 AK-47, 3 SKS, 1 Springfield O3's, 4 B-40 RL's and 160 mm mortar.

On 25 March the S-5 Team while on a medcap mission in the village of Ea Pac at AQ792172 made contact with three individuals. There were negative casualties but 1 AK-47 was captured.

On 28 March the S-5 Team again made contact in the village of Ea Trun at AQ829108 with negative results.

On 2 April a 10 man stay behind force from C Co engaged 7 NVA at AQ775193 resulting in 1 NVA KIA. On 6 April the battalion FSB displaced to AQ837288 again in a two unit, two day air and convoy move.

On 9 April the FSB received 50 rounds of 82mm fire, most of which landed well outside of the perimeter. The result of the attack was 1 WIA negative damage.

On the same day LRRP team 35 received small arms fire while checking out a bunker complex at ZV243222 which wounded one of its members.

On 12 April the battalion FSB displaced to AQ782178 in a two day two unit move by air and convoy.

On 13 April 74D, a four man Recon Team, made contact with one individual resulting in 1 US KIA.

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On 14 April 74D spotted and fired upon two individuals wearing black PJs and tan clothing, killing one and wounding the other.

On 17 April LRRP Team received heavy small arms fire while being inserted at AQ835335. The team was immediately extracted and air and artillery put into the area causing numerous secondary explosions.

On 20 April C Co and D Co were CA'd into the area of the LRRP contact to check out the cause of the secondary explosions and exploit anything that might be in the area.

c. Training:

(1) General: Throughout the entire reporting period maximum advantage was taken of every opportunity to conduct training in a variety of subjects. The majority of training was conducted at the FSB. Although certain subjects such as adjustment of artillery fire were conducted at company patrol bases when the tactical situation permitted the greatest emphasis was placed on firing of individual and crew served weapons to include familiarization with captured enemy weapons.

(2) Schools: A total of 27 persons from the battalion attended the 4th Division NCO academy during the reporting period with a 100% completion ratio.

(3) Chemical: During the reporting period the battalion has placed continually increasing importance on chemical operations. Various types of chemical munitions have been obtained for use in support of future battalion operations. Some of these items include CS grenades, 4.2" and 105 chemical rounds and M-8 gas disperser. The use of the M-8 has been incorporated into the FSB perimeter defense plan and classes to familiarize the units with its capabilities and employment have been organized.

(4) Psywar: Leaflet drops and propaganda loud speaker broadcasts have continued to be used extensively the battalion throughout the entire reporting period. The use of the artillery propaganda round has also come into use and shows good promise of being used more often in the future.

(5) Logistics: During Phase I the battalion trains was set up at the Dak To air strip and resupply was carried out by CH-47 and UH-1D aircraft. During this period the resupply was good and hampered only slightly by harrasing enemy fire.

During Phase II resupply was superb. The trains area was set up in Ban Me Thuot and received its supply directly from Cam Rahn Bay by convoy or air. The only problem encountered was that of a personnel shortage which trying to maintain such a large ASP to support the three artillery batteries in TF-12.

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(5) Civil Affairs: During Phase I the battalion S-5 Team remained at Pleiku and conducted its good neighbor policy in its assigned villages around base camp.

When Phase II began the S-5 team shifted its operation to the vicinity of the FSB. The team conducted medcap operations in the surrounding villages and often operated with armed Psyops teams sent from the 23d ARVN Division. In this area the team managed to do a good job as well as collect some good intelligence information about recent VC activities in the villages.

(6) Personnel: The principal changes in key personnel within the battalion during the reporting period were the commanders of D Co and HHC, and the S-2, S-1, and battalion executive officer. Also quite a number of new personnel have entered the battalion as replacements for those wounded in action in Dak To, Kontum and Ban Me Thuot.

(7) Artillery: During Phase I B/4/42 Arty provided DS for the battalion in the Dak To area. Upon moving to Ban Me Thuot, B/4/42 was replaced by C/3/6 as the DS battery and B/5/16 and C/7/15 were added to TF-12 as GS units.

While in the Dak To area the battalion was in such a position that all maneuver elements as well as the FSB were continually supported by various artillery units other than our own. In the Ban Me Thuot area all other supporting artillery units were lost and the TF had to operate with only its own guns.

(8) Organization: During the reporting period the battalion conducted an extensive consolidation program of all sections. In the consolidation all of the job requirements and personnel that are used in the rear were consolidated to produce an economy of force. This decreased the number of people required to fulfill the jobs in the rear and increased the number who can come forward to fill the more important slots.

Section II: Commander's Observations and Recommendations

Part I Observations (lessons learned)

a. Operations:

Items; Use of SP Artillery

Discussion: Self propelled artillery can be used very effectively where road and trail net works allow its movement over or around natural obstacles. Terrain is the major restrictive factor involved in employment of SP artillery. The ability of the unit to travel as a self sustained, fully operational unit increases the hip shoot potential of SP artillery. During operations in the Ban Me Thuot area, the moving of the FSB was keyed to where the SP unit could travel. The increased caliber of th SP weapons allowed for greater increase in range and consequently operational plans.

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Items: Size of Recon Patrols

Discussion: During operations in the areas where large forces of the enemy were deployed, the use of small four man patrols proved successful in locating and disrupting enemy lines of infiltration.

Observations: Small recon units of four or five men are forced to move under maximum security measures. The reaction of the patrol in an enemy area is such that the enemy is seen and reacted against without knowledge of the whereabouts of the patrol. Stay behind forces, and the bushmaster program effectively reduced the enemy pattern of using trail net works and checking out abandoned patrol bases. This program of employment of small units had the added training side effect with junior NCO's and potential NCO's.

Item: Patrolling vicinity FSB

Discussion: As the enemy threat during the reporting period was great, there was an increased countermortar program. To preempt a mortar or ground attack extensive patrols were conducted out to one kilometer or more depending on terrain. The patrols were conducted by the FSB security company. Their normal size was 4 individuals who operated in an assigned sector during during day-light hours establishing a hawkeye ambush at night.

Item: Consolidation of composite mortar platoon:

Discussion: The 4.2 inch and 81mm mortar crews were consolidated to provide a better trained, more responsive mortar battery. The effectiveness of the program has resulted in faster and more responsive fire and a crew of cross trained mortarmen on both 4.2 inch mortars and 81mm.

Item: Artillery control headquarters.

Discussion: During the time when the battalion operated as a separate task force with attached artillery batteries, the need for a control headquarters answerable to the Task Force Commander was necessary. This headquarters allowed the Task Force Commander to have instantaneous artillery results not hampered by cross coordination. It also afforded excellent advice to the Task Force Commander on the employment capabilities of the artillery. It had the major advantage of providing a co-located Artillery TOC with the Task Force TOC.

2. Logistics:

Items: Organization of Trains

Discussion: The requirement for a complex, compact logistical control element is a necessity for task force organization. Representatives for all the attached units must compose a logistical staff to assist the task force. Preselected areas must be large enough to accommodate the trains and ASP complex. Additional consideration must be given to security of the area.

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3. Intelligence.

Items: Coordination of US, ARVN collection sources.

Discussion: A close working relationship must be established between task force and ARVN intelligence agencies. Areas known to the ARVN, because of the responsibility for operational areas, can give the newly arrived unit advanced intelligence of great value.

Part II Recommendations:

1. Operations:

- a. Use SP and towed artillery when composing a task force to allow for greater flexibility in operations over terrain obstacles.
- b. Increase and continue hawk-eye patrol organization.
- c. Continue and stress the importance of, FSB local patrolling and security.
- d. Create an artillery control headquarters for all task force organizations using more than one battery of artillery.

2. Logistics: Task Force organization must have a complete and well organized trains area.

3. Intelligence: In areas where US units move into areas controlled by ARVN units intelligence and our studies help facilitate operations.

Part III, Commanders Comments:

Operations conducted in the Ban Me Thuot area with units from the 23rd ARVN Division afforded the US forces a rare opportunity to see the ARVN forces in action. This associates greatly increased the US soldiers respect and admiration for the ARVN forces fighting ability. Close cooperation between ARVN advisors and staff sections of the US force provided a rare insight to the US advisor's role in Vietnam.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

GEORGE H WILKINS III
Captain, Infantry
Adjutant

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