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AGAM-P (M) (15 May 68) FOR ST-RD-67X199

SUBJECT: Combat After Action Report: Operation PERSHING; Battle of Tam Quan, 1st Brigade, 1st Air Cavalry Division, 6-20 December 1967

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2. Information contained in this report is provided to insure appropriate benefits in the future from lessons learned during current operations and may be adapted for use in developing training material.

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HEADQUARTERS
1ST BRIGADE
1ST AIR CAVALRY DIVISION
APO 96490

30 December 1967

SUBJECT: Combat Operations after Action Report - Battle of TAX QUAN.

TO: See Distribution

1. (U) OPERATION: Operation PERSHING.


3. (U) LOCATION: TAX QUAN, HCMC NHCN District, Binh Dinh Province, RVN.

4. (U) COMMAND HEADQUARTERS: 1st Brigade, 1st Air Cavalry Division.

5. (U) REPORTING OFFICER: Colonel Donald V. Rattan, CO, 1st Bde, 1st ACD.

6. (C) TASK ORGANIZATION:

a. 6-10 December
1st Bde, 1st ACD
ACav Filt, 4-5 Mech (eff 061245 Dec)

TF 1-8 Cav
1-8 Cav
2 ACav Filt, 4-5 Mech (1 Filt eff 061700 Dec to 081245 Dec 67)
D 1-50 Mech (eff 071230 Dec to 101530 Dec 67)
A Troop 1-9 Cav (061730 - 082025 Dec 67)
2 Sec, C 4-50 Artv (AV)
A, 8th Engr (-) (with 6 D7 Dozers 19th Engr)

2-8 Cav

TF 1-12 Cav (eff 090930 Dec 67)
B 1-50 Mech (eff 100630 Dec 67)

1-50 Mech (-) (TF DOLPHIN) (Received 090630 Dec 67)
B 1-50 Mech (released 100630 Dec 67)
B 1-3 Cav (091230 Dec to 120730 Dec 67)
C 1-12 (091541 Dec to 101245 Dec 67)

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b. 11 - 14 December
1st Bde, 1st ACD
ACav Plt, A 1-50 Mech
1-8 Cav

2-8 Cav
TF 1-12 Cav
D 1-50 Mech (released 160600 Dec)

A, 8th Engr (-)

1-50 Mech (-) (released 160300 Dec)
C 1-6 Cav (eff 111045 - 130730 Dec)

c. 15 - 18 December
1st Bde, 1st ACD
ACav Plt, A 1-50 Mech

1-8 Cav
TF 2-8 Cav
C 1-50 Mech (eff 161400 Dec)
TF 1-12 Cav

A (-) 1-50 Mech (off 151455 Dec)

C 1-50 Mech (eff 160945 - 161400 Dec) . . .

A, 8th Engr (-)

d. 19 - 20 Dec
1st Bde, 1st ACD
ACav Plt, A 1-50 Mech

1-8 Cav (-D, 191707 - 201446 Dec)

TF 2-6 Cav
D 1-8 Cav (eff 191707 - 201446 Dec)
C 1-50 Mech

TF 1-12 Cav
A (-) 1-50 Mech

e. 1st Bde, 1st ACD attached units 06 - 20 Dec 67.
(1) ACav Plt, A 1-50 Mech (eff 061245 Dec)
(2) 1st Plt, 515th LS Co
(3) 1st Co, 220th NTF En
(4) 2 Sqds, 13th Inf Scout Drg Plt
(5) Ta, 13th Sig
(6) Tr, 245th Psyops Co
(7) Tr, FPO/C, 191st MS Det

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7. (C) SUPPORTING FORCES:

A. 8th Rngr (DS)
B-29 Arty (105) (DS)
2-20 Arty (ARR) (GS)
7-13 Arty (105) (-B Btry, GSR 2-19 Arty)
B(-) 7-15 Arty (8") (GSR 2-19 Arty)
C 1-30 Arty (155) (GSR 2-19 Arty)
B & C Co, 228th AHB
A Co, 225th AHB
Pathfinder Tms, 11th Avn Gp
In Sec, 11th Avn Gp
TACP
A Co, 15th Med Bn
A Det, 37th Maint Bn
2d FRS, 1st ACD Spee Cmt
4 Sect, B 1-29 Arty (TAB) (CPCON)
6 Sqds, 61st Arty (AW)
7th Air Force (TACACR)
19th Engr (Bulldozer Support)

8. (C) INTELLIGENCE:

a. During the last week of November and the first part of December there were many indications that significant combined VC/22d NVA Regimental operations were being planned for the BONG SON Plains area. There were many agent reports concerning this, and other intelligence indicated that the 22d NVA Regimental Headquarters moved into the TAM QUAN (BS 892086) area on or about 2 December. By 5-6 December reports of major attacks being planned on TAM QUAN and ARVN installations and bridges along Hwy 1 between BONG SON and TAM QUAN were swelling in volume.

b. Probing attacks on the bridges and the ARVN installations along Hwy 1 increased in intensity during the period 1-4 December. The sub-district headquarters at TAM QUAN and the ARVN base at LZ TOM (BS 890071) both received ground attacks on the night of 4 December.

c. During the buildup period, aerial surveillance of the entire BONG SON Plain was intensified by scouts of the 1st Brigade and the 1-9 Cavalry Squadron. Ground search operations by the 40th ARVN Regiment and the 1st Brigade were increased in tempo. However, no firm contact was made with NVA units nor could they be accurately located.

d. Late in the afternoon of 6 December, the 1st Brigade received an intelligence report indicating that the 22d NVA Regimental Headquarters was located in the 40th ARVN area approximately 1500 meters south of LZ TOM. Scout helicopters from A Troop, 1-9 Cavalry Squadron were sent to investigate and immediately spotted an antenna and received small arms fire. A Troop air assaulted an infantry platoon in the vicinity (BS 897071) at 1630 hours; however, it was immediately pinned
down by intense enemy small arms and automatic weapons fire and unable
to move. At 1655 hours the 1-9 Cavalry Squadron inserted the weapon
platoon of D Troop to reinforce the platoon of A Troop and it also was
pinned down and unable to move. Elements of the 22d NVA Regiment were
finally pinpointed and the Battle of TAN VIEN began.

9. (C) MISSION. Fix and destroy the 22d NVA Regiment.

10. (C) CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS. The lst Bde utilizes mechanized
forces, for armored protection and firepower; and organic maneuver
units to overrun and destroy the enemy once he is fixed. All available
air and artillery fires are utilized to drive the enemy from his
prepared positions or to destroy him in his positions prior to all
attacks. Use of riot control agent CS enhanced in the proper in
conjunction with artillery-and air fires. Other allied forces and
organic and attached units used on the periphery of contact areas to
inhibit the escape of the enemy. Detailed planning and execution of
artillery blocking fires, fires in the objective area and illumination
for night operations is necessary. Contact with the enemy must be
maintained but if lost immediate pursuit must be executed by fire,
aircraft surveillance and by maneuver units. Thorough police of all
contact areas is essential following the defeat and expulsion of the
enemy. Priority of all fires to the attacking units.

11. (C) EXECUTION.

a. Maneuver.

(1) 5 Dec: (Tab A) At 1725 hours the lst Brigade assumed
control of the action and the lst Bn, 8th Cav was directed to land forces
and destroy the enemy forces in the area. By 1800 hours B 1-8 Cav had
air assaulted into the contact area at B5 897071 and was joined by one
ACAV Platoon of 1-50 Mech that had been moved from LZ ENGLISH.
After landing, B 1-3 attacked to the east, supported by the APC's of
the ACAY Platoon but was unable to penetrate the enemy positions which
were well prepared and completely hidden in the dense undergrowth. Using
the APC's and in a coordinated effort with A 1-9, 1-8 Cav, was able
to extract the two cavalry squadron platoons, that had made the initial
contact, by 2100 hours. After the extraction of the two cavalry
squadron platoons, B 1-3 established their night perimeter with the
ACAY Platoon. Continuous illumination was provided by flareships,
Moccabie and Spooky and by 2200 hours the small arms and automatic
weapons fire had ceased. Continuous artillery support pounded the
area of contact throughout the night and blocking fires interdicted the
enemy routes of escape.

(2) 7 Dec: (Tab B) At 0725 hours, a CS prep by ABA hit the
contact area, followed by an artillery TOT. By 0815 hours, all elements
of A 1-3 Cav had completed their air assault to a secure LZ vicinity
B5 895073 to join in the attack. Another ACAY Platoon and the 2 Duster
Section from LZ LEXY joined the forces in contact at 0835 hours.
By 0915 hours, Companies B and C, 2-3 Cav had completed their air assault to BS 930605 and BS 930075, respectively, to inhibit the enemy's escape to the east. Meanwhile, an ARVN force consisting of one company of the 1st Bn, 40th Regt, one Regional Force Company and one APC Troop was conducting operations north of the area of contact above the 03 E-W grid line between highway 1 and the South China Sea to inhibit enemy movement to the north. Another ARVN force, consisting of the 4th Bn (-), 40th Regt and one company of the 3rd Bn, 40th Regt, was conducting operations to the south below the 06 E-W grid line. At 0915 hours the attack to the east by 2-3 Cav began. Stiff resistance from the well-prepared enemy positions halted the advance and the forces were pulled back to allow more artillery, CS, AHA and Tac air strikes to hit the area. D 1-50 Mech was released from 2d Brigade OPCON to 1-3 Cav at 1230 hours. At 1406 hours, A and B Companies 1-3 Cav with flame thrower APCs again attacked the enemy positions and successfully penetrated the initial bunker and trench network. The flamethrower's were especially useful in neutralizing the bunkers and trenches. Two D-7 bulldozers were brought into the contact area to begin destruction of the bunkers and trenches and to construct a causeway across the marshy rice paddy areas for use by the APCs. To the east the two companies of 2-3 Cav had only sporadic contact throughout the day as they pushed to the west. At 1645 hours, the CP of C Company was pinned down by intense automatic weapons fire while crossing a rice paddy vicinity BS 922072. The CP was finally extracted at 1900 hours and joined the rest of the company at their night location. The ARVN force conducting screening operations to the north of the area of contact was engaged in heavy contact throughout the day with enemy forces trying to escape to the north. The ARVN force conducting the screening operation to the south had no contact. At last light all units were established in their night positions.

(3) 8 Dec: (Tab C) at 0745 hours, C 1-8 Cav air assaulted to BS 895072 to relieve B 1-8 Cav in the contact area. At 0815 hours, an artillery TOT hit the enemy positions vicinity BS 899072. The TOT was followed by an air strike and another artillery TOT. A highly effective CS attack was then used driving the enemy from their bunkers and trenches into an artillery TOT and twenty three enemy were killed as verified by aerial scouts. At 0845 hours D 1-50 Mech began a reconnaissance in force to the east edge of the village encountering light resistance. They pushed east and north to vicinity BS 904073 and then returned to the starting point. After an intensive CS and artillery preparation, D 1-50 Mech and A and C 1-8 Cav conducted a coordinated attack east and north, finding many destroyed bunkers and enemy killed by artillery and air strikes. The companies swept back through the same area, policing the battlefield, and returned to their night perimeter at 1320 hours. At 1330 hours the 1-50 Mech and D, 1-50 Mech became OPCON to the 1st Brigade and were sent to LZ ENGLISH North, a secure area, to prepare for employment. At 1245 hours the two ACAV platoons of A and C 1-50 Mech were released from the area of contact and returned to LZ ENGLISH and LZ ENGLISH respectively to assume their defensive postures. The two companies of the 2-3 Cav had only light resistance.
from snipers throughout the day and at 1520 hours, were air assaulted to vicinity BS 876114 in response to an intelligence report indicating the 9th Bn, 22d NVA Regiment was located in that area. The companies established numerous ambushes and sent out Killer Teams but had no contact. The ARVN 40th Regiment continued their screening operations north and south of the DAI DONG battlefield. The northern screening force, composed of two companies of the 4th Bn, one Regional Forces Company and one APC Troop, had no contact with enemy forces during the day. The southern screening force, composed of one company of the 3d Bn engaged the 8th Bn, 22d NVA Regiment vicinity BS 905052. This engagement ended at 1500 hours. Two companies of the 4th Bn were airlifted to the contact at 1650 hours to reinforce the company in contact and an ARVN APC Troop moved into the area.

9 Dec: (Tab C) A & C 1-8 Cav and D 1-50 Mech began the final sweep through DAI DONG at 0845 hours after heavy artillery and CS strikes. There was little enemy resistance during the sweep and the southern edge of the village was reached at 1530 hours. The force returned to the northwestern edge of the village and established their night positions vicinity BS 890723. A 1-8 was airlifted from that location at 1630 hours and returned to LZ ENGLISH. B 1-50 moved out of LZ ENGLISH North at 0700 hours under control of Task Force "Dolphin" D-50 Mech (--) and headed toward the beach vicinity BS 926079 where it would link up with B 1-8 Cav, which air assaulted 1500 hours north of that location at 1102 hours. C 1-12 Cav, which had arrived from DAK 70 at 1240 hours, air assaulted to vicinity BS 927122 at 1341 hours and became CPCON to Task Force Dolphin at that time. C 1-12 Cav established a blocking position to prevent the enemy from using the beach as an escape route to the north. D 1-12 Cav, which had arrived from DAK 70 at 1050 hours, air assaulted to vicinity BS 926079 and became CPCON to Task Force Dolphin. The 2-8 Cav continued to search for the 9th Bn, 22d NVA Regiment in the BONG SON Plain west of highway 1 but failed to make contact. The southern screening force of the ARVN 40th Regiment, composed of the 3d Bn (-), 4th Bn (-) and one APC Troop were under attack by elements of the 8th Bn, 22d NVA Regiment at 0520 hours. The attack was repulsed but sporadic to heavy contact continued throughout the day vicinity BS 905050.

10 Dec: (Tab C) At approximately 0900 hours the Commanding Officer of the 40th ARVN Regiment reported that civilians were seen running from the village of TUONG LAM (2) (BS 925055). TF 1-12 relieved TF DOLPHIN of command of the Task Force and its AO. B 1-12 Cav air assaulted to vicinity BS 926079 at 0852 hours and joined D 1-12 Cav and B 1-50 Mech. TF 1-12 Cav was directed to turn B 1-50 Mech south and search TUONG LAM (1). At 0925 hours B 1-50 Mech moved southwest toward TUONG LAM (1). B 1-12 began a search to the west. D 1-12 Cav continued to search and destroy vicinity BS 926079, seeking elements of the 7th Bn, 22d NVA Regiment, that were suspected to have withdrawn in that direction. At 1055 hours, while approaching TUONG LAM (1), B 1-50 Mech came under intense small arms and automatic weapons fire. B 1-12 Cav
maneuvered to the right (west) flank and C 1-12 Cav air assaulted at 1220 hours to BS 932055 to close the left flank. Three coordinated attacks by the three companies were made on the enemy positions during the course of the afternoon, each being made after intensive artillery preparation. At 1850 hours the companies broke contact and established their night positions while artillery continued to hit the enemy positions throughout the night under illumination by flare ships. A & D 2-8 Cav were air assaulted to BR 963994 and BR 925996, respectively, at 1136 hours and 1106 hours to block enemy escape routes into the CAY GIEP Mountains. At 0900 hours a combined force of the 3d Bn (-), 4th Bn (-), 40th ARVN Regiment and one APC Troop located at BS 911043 were attacked from the north by elements of the 8th Bn, 22d NVA Regiment. The attack was repulsed with ARA, US artillery and SPGX providing supporting fires. The ARVN force attacked north four times beginning at first light and inflicted heavy casualties on the 8th Bn. At 1545 hours D 1-50 Mech joined the ARVN forces and participated in the fifth and final assault of the day at 1600 hours. D 1-50 Mech remained GPCON to TF DOLPHIN; however, close coordination between the commanders of the ARVN 40th Regiment and TF DOLPHIN in a command and control helicopter above the battlefield controlled and coordinated the combined attack. The 1-8 Cav moved to and conducted search and destroy operations in the BONG SON Plain west of Highway 1 attempting to make contact with the 9th Bn, 22d NVA Regiment; however, no significant sightings or contacts were made.

(6) 11 Dec: (Tab D) TF 1-12 Cav initiated an attack against THIEN LAM (2) from the north at 0715 hours after an intense artillery TOT and CS strike. Resistance was sporadic throughout the day and the contact was broken by noon. Further to the north in the vicinity of BS 920978, D 1-12 was in light contact throughout the day. 2-8 Cav continued to be positioned to inhibit enemy escape to the CAY GIEP Mountains. Ambush elements of D 2-8 Cav located at BS 926048 had contact with an unknown sized enemy force at 2215 hours and 2245 hours. The enemy was moving from north to south attempting to escape when contact was made with the ambush elements. 1-8 Cav continued to search for the 9th Bn, 22d NVA Regiment in the area west of Highway 1. The Bn had no significant sightings or contacts throughout the day. TF DOLPHIN had no enemy contact throughout the day, remaining in the vicinity of BS 911058 and conducting a police of the battlefield. The 3d and 4th Bns of the ARVN 40th Regiment were relieved in place by the 3d and 4th Vietnamese Marine Bns of Marine Task Force Alpha (MTFA) and had no contact during the day.

(7) 12 Dec: (Tab D) MTFA and TF DOLPHIN as a combined force and TF 1-12 Cav began pursuit of the 22d NVA Regiment north with Marine Task Force Alpha/TF DOLPHIN on the left, and TF 1-12 Cav on the right. D 1-50 and D 1-12 who were linked up at the boundary separating TF 1-12 and Marine Task Force Alpha, became engaged with an unknown sized enemy force vicinity BS 917072 at 1655 hours. Artillery, ARA, and a successful flanking movement from the east eliminated this last pocket of resistance. The pursuit carried to
the 08 E-W grid line with no further contact. 1-8 Cav and 2-8 Cav continued to operate in their assigned area of operations but had no significant sightings or contacts.

(8) 13 Dec: (Tab D) TF 1-12 Cav continued the pursuit north during the day and had only one contact. B 1-12 ambushed an estimated squad of NVA at BS 927088 at 0630 hours and contact was broken shortly thereafter. The Task Force continued to work on "Shiport's Island" (BS 915037), destroying bunkers and fighting positions there, and had no further contact with the enemy. The 1-8 Cav and 2-8 Cav continued to conduct search and destroy operations in their assigned area of operations, the 1-8 Cav searching west of Highway 1 and 2-8 Cav searching from their blocking positions to the south. Neither of these units had any significant sightings or contact throughout the day. TF DOLPHIN continued to conduct search and destroy operations vicinity BS 910096 but had no significant contact throughout the day. Marine Task Force Alpha concluded their operation and returned south to their normally assigned AO at 0830 hours.

(9) 14 Dec: (Tab D) All elements of the Brigade and 40th AARNW Regiment continued search and destroy operations in their assigned AO’s but had no significant sightings or contact. The 1-50 Mech Hq, B and D Companions were returned to the 24 Dec at 0600 hours.

(10) 15 Dec: (Tab E) In response to an intelligence report indicating that an NVA force was located in the vicinity of BS 920050, the 1st Bde moved the 1-12 Cav to that general vicinity and made heavy contact with elements of the 22d NVA Regiment. At the time of receipt of the intelligence report, B 1-12 was located vicinity BS 920050 and C 1-12 was located vicinity BS 926047. D 1-12 air assaulted vicinity BS 920052 from LZ ENGLISH at 0719 hours and all companies began the search for the enemy, at 0810 hours contact was initiated by C 1-12. All companies began to close into the area of contact. A request was forwarded to the 1st ACD for an additional Mech Company from 1-50 Mech and approval was granted. C 1-12 moved to vicinity BS 916053 and was heavily engaged. B 1-12 moved west to vicinity BS 921055 and was in moderate contact. D 1-12 moved southwest and then to the north executing a flanking movement and was in light to heavy contact throughout the movement. The company succeeded in penetrating the enemy positions to vicinity BS 923054, A (-) 1-50 Mech became OPCON to 1-12 Cav at 1455 hours and moved into position with C 1-12 for another attack. Intensive tactical air strikes and an artillery preparation were used in an attempt to neutralize enemy positions and at 1530 hours A (-) 1-50 Mech and C 1-12 Cav attacked to the north. This attack was repulsed by savage enemy resistance and all elements pulled back to break contact and allow heavy artillery fires to soften the enemy positions. By 1730 hours contact was broken and all elements were in their night defensive positions. During the period of contact elements of 1-8 Cav, 2-8 Cav, and the 40th AARNW Regiment were being moved into blocking positions north, west and south of the point of contact. B 1-8 air assaulted
to vicinity BS 910063 at 1330 hours and established blocking positions
to the north. A 2-5 Cav air assaulted from BS 764034 to vicinity BS
936042 at 1325 hours and established blocking positions north of the
point of contact. D 2-8 moved to vicinity BS 920046 at 1330 hours
and blocked possible enemy routes of egress to the southwest. A Co
and D Co, 2-5 Cav established seven (7) platoon-size blocking
positions from the 93 N-S grid line east to the ocean along the 04
E-W grid line and completely cut off the routes of egress to the south
and southwest. The 40th ARVN Regiment closed the massive Gordon
of contact area by moving the 3d En (--) and one APC troop to blocking
positions vicinity BS 900050 and the 4th En to BS 903043, positioned
on escape routes to the west. By midnight, seven US Companies and
two ARVN Battalions were in the contact area (B, C, D) 1-12 Cav, E 1-8
Cav, A, D 2-6 Cav, A (-) 1-50 Mech, and 3d En (--), 40th En, 40th ARVN).
Continuous battlefield illumination was provided during the hours
of darkness by UH-1H Little birds, Moonshine and Spooky. Heavy artillery
fires were used constantly during the night to neutralized the enemy
positions and interdict routes of egress.

(11) 16 Dec: (Tab E) The attack on Tia Long (1) began at
1030 hours after six (6) tactical air strikes, a CS strike and a ten
minute artillery preparation by four batteries. The coordinated
attack was made from south to north by C 1-50 Koch, who became OPGC
T& 1-12 Cav at 0945 hours, on the left, A (-) 1-50 Koch on the right
with C 1-12 following the two mech companies. The attack through the
village was completed at 1200 hours with the attacking force meeting
only light resistance, at 1330 hours a vigorous pursuit of the
enemy was initiated with A and D 2-6 Cav and C 1-50 Mech (OPGC 2-8
Cav at 1400 hours) pursuing to the north to vicinity BS 932062. TF
1-12 Cav continued to police the battlefield during the afternoon
of 16 Dec. The 1-8 Cav continued to search for elements of the 22d
NVA Regiment on the BONG SON Plain west of Highway 1 but had no
significant sightings or contact throughout the day. The 2d En
replaced the 4th En, 40th ARVN Regiment and with the 3d En (--) remained in their blocking positions to the west but had no contact
with the enemy.

(12) 17 Dec: TF 1-12 Cav with a platoon of A Co, 8th
Engineers continued to police the battlefield and destroy enemy
fortifications in Tia Long (2) TF 2-8 Cav continued the pursuit
north to vicinity BS 923075 but did not reestablish contact with
the 22d NVA Regiment. The 1-8 Cav continued to search for elements
of the 22d NVA Regiment on the BONG SON Plain west of Highway 1 but had
no significant sightings during the day. The 2d En and 3d En (--) 40th ARVN
Koi conducted pursuit the enemy to the northeast from their
blocking positions but had no significant contact.

(13) 18 Dec: All elements of the 1st 3d and 40th
ARVN Regiment continued to search for the 22d NVA Regiment on the
BONG SON Plain but had no significant contact throughout the day.
19 Dec: During the morning hours all elements of the 1st Bde continued to search for the 22d NVA Regiment. At 1110 hours a reliable intelligence report pinpointed elements of the 22d NVA Regiment vicinity BS 952010. Aerial reconnaissance of the area by A Troop, 1-9 Cav revealed an antenna wire leading to a large bunker complex. At 1408 hours, D 2-8 was air assaulted to vicinity BS 952010 to exploit this intelligence and was engaged by an unknown size enemy force vicinity BS 953010. D Co immediately broke contact to allow tactical air strikes and artillery to neutralize the area. Three more Companies were air assaulted to the west and south of the contact area to block routes of egress. As D 2-8 was pulling back to break contact, an airborne Psychological Warfare Team orbited the area telling the civilians to leave the village and encouraging the NVA to surrender. A few of the civilians obeyed the message and departed to the south to get out of the target area but the NVA refused to surrender. A total of six air strikes were used and by 1700 hours the pinpoint accuracy of the Air Force had completely destroyed the bunker complex. By 1800 hours all areas around the contact were occupied by blocking forces with D 2-3 on the east, B 2-8 on the southern periphery, C 2-0 to the west, D 1-6 (OPCON 2-3 Cav) to the southeast and the BONG SON River blocking escape routes to the north. The four Companies established platoon size blocking positions while Lightning Bug and ARA patrolled the river. Continuous battlefield illumination was provided by HH-1H helicopters, Moonshine and Spooky while heavy artillery fires hit the target area throughout the night. The 1-8 Cav and 1-12 Cav had no significant contact during the day. Several times during the night the enemy was sighted crossing the river to the north and engaged by artillery and ARA, a true assessment was impossible but many casualties were undoubtedly inflicted.

20 Dec: Four air strikes and intensive artillery fires were used to neutralize the contact area prior to the attack to the west by D 2-8 at 1000 hours. A coordinated attack with D 2-8 Cav and C 1-50 Moch on line had been planned but swift tidal currents and steep muddy banks in the BONG SON River prevented C 1-50 Moch from crossing to join the attack. The accuracy and devastation of the air and artillery fires had completely eliminated the enemy resistance and D 2-8 completed the attack through NGH2EP with no contact.

Although the Battle of TAX QUAN officially ended at 202400 hours December, 1967, the 2-8 Cav remained in NGH2EP for three (3) days digging through the demolished bunkers and fortified positions recovering enemy bodies and weapons. These figures are reflected in the totals for the Battle of TAX QUAN.

b. Support.

(1) Aviation: The organic and supporting aviation elements provided the following support to the 1st Brigade during the Battle of TAX QUAN.

(a) 1st Bde Avn Flt.
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1. UH-1H:
   a. Total hours flown 276.5
   b. Average hours flown per A/C 60
   c. Average hours flown per day per A/C 20
   d. Total number of missions 155
   e. Total number of sorties 485
   f. Average number of missions flown per A/C per day 7.2
   g. Average number of sorties flown per A/C per day 31

2. UH-1H (CC)
   a. Total hours flown 237.7
   b. Average hours flown per A/C 53
   c. Average hours flown per day per A/C 4.3
   d. Total number of missions 163
   e. Total number of sorties 649
   f. Average number of missions flown per A/C per day 3.7
   g. Average number of sorties flown per A/C per day 13.2

(b) 229th Avn En
1. Total hours flown 432
2. Total log sorties 1829
3. Total tons of cargo logged 2973
4. Total combat sorties 125
5. Total combat troops carried 163
6. Total hours flown by gunships 485
7. Total escort sorties flown by gunships 315
8. UH-1H aircraft utilized as CC's flew a total of 120 hours.

(c) 228th Avn En
1. Total hours flown 913
2. Total PAX transported 12064
3. Total tons cargo carried 1529

(2) Artillery: 2-19th Artillery and ARA provided close and continuous fire support during the entire period. Expenditures for the period were:

(a) Missions: Observed, Green or supported targets
   Budgeted Total
   1401
   2497
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(b) Ammo:

By type: 40060 2010 1074 156 656 1570 45433

(c) Ammo: 29469 9642

(3) Air Fires: Air fires were responsive and accurate. The volume, flexibility and adaptability of the air effort in support of the Battle of TAM QUAN was outstanding. Support for the Battle of TAM QUAN:

(a) Total Missions:
1. 57 FAC
2. 13 Skyraiders
3. 2 Night Owls

(b) Total sorties:
1. F100 - 126
2. F57 - 2
3. F4C - 11

(c) Ordnance Expended:
1. 300 M 32 High Drag Bombs (79.5 tons)
2. 225 M 117 GP Bombs (67.6 tons)
3. 116 KAP (44.5 tons)
4. 23400 20mm 20mm

(d) Bomb Damage Assessment:
1. 118 Military structures destroyed
2. 43 Military structures damaged
3. 45 Bunkers destroyed
4. 18 Bunkers damaged
5. 3 Bunkers uncovered
6. 90% Meters of trench uncovered
7. 1-50 Cal MG position destroyed

(4) Engineer: A Company. 8th Engineers provided

(a) 9 Engineer platoon days (demolitions, minesweeps, and police of the battlefield).

(b) 24 Bulldozers hours

(c) 24 Hours with 3436 (Excavator)
12. (C) ADMINISTRATION AND LOGISTICS. Administrative and logistical support during the Battle of TAM QUAN continued to operate in an outstanding manner and presented no major problems.

13. (C) RESULTS.

a. Friendly Losses:    US      ARVN
   (1) KIA             58       30
   (2) WIA             250      71

b. Enemy Losses:
   (1) KIA (EC)       650 (US & ARVN combined figures)
   (2) PM            3 KVA, 29 VC (US only)

(3) Weapons Losses: (US only)
   (a) 27 AK 47's
   (b) 50 rifles (SIS's, ML Carbines, MAS 36, & Mauser)
   (c) 3 B 40 RL
   (d) 2 75 RL
   (e) 6 BPD MG
   (f) 3 7.62 CHICOM Type 53 HMG
   (g) 3 pistols

(4) Equipment Losses:
   (a) 31 Mortar rounds
   (b) 5 Bangalore Torpedoes
   (c) 4 RL rounds
   (d) 7240 rounds small arms ammo
   (e) 2 B 50 RL rounds
   (f) 52 grenades
   (g) 26 gas masks
   (h) 1000 ft MD 1
   (i) 4 mines
   (j) 1 Field telephone
   (k) 2 pair binoculars

14. (C) COMBATANTS ANALYSIS. The Battle of TAM QUAN was the largest and most successful battle conducted by the 1st Bde thus far during Operation FRESKING. The tremendous success realized in this battle cannot be credited to the Bde alone. The victory is equally shared in the outstanding and courageous participation by allies, other services and other units not normally found operating with the 1st Bde. The force that was molded on the field of battle during the period 6-20 December 1967 was an unbeatable combination of air, land and sea elements fully supported by outstanding combat support and combat service support units of all types and missions. It was a distinct pleasure to command and associate with the projects, quick
reacting, flexible and tireless team of professionals who participated in the several engagements of the Battle of Tam Quan. Their one burning goal, to find and defeat the enemy, became a realization in gaining this important victory.

DONALD V. RATAN
Colonel, Infantry
Commanding

Inclosures 1 - Lessons Learned
2 - Sketch Maps

DISTRIBUTION
12 1st ACD
1 1-3 Cav
1 2-8 Cav
1 1-12 Cav
1 2-19 Arty
1 2-20 Arty
2 8th Engr
1 11th Avn Gp
1 228th ASH En
1 227th AH En
1 ALO (USA Health)
1 13th Sig
1 Spt Cnd
10 Eds HHC
1 2d Ede
1 3d Ede
8 53
1 1-50 Mech
2 1-9 Cav
1 Mil Hist

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1. **(C) LESSON LEARNED:** The most efficient way to eliminate enemy bunkers and fortified positions is by TAC AIR.

   a. Discussion: During the Battle of TAM QUAN the 22d NVA fought from well prepared bunkers and trenches. While heavy artillery is effective against the smaller bunkers, the time involved in adjusting and completing a precision destruction mission on each target precludes its use as the sole means of eliminating bunkers and fortified positions. Medium and light artillery has no effect whatsoever on the bunkers and trenches typically used by the NVA unless one receives a direct hit.

   b. Observation: TAC AIR must be included in the commander’s plans for the destruction of bunker and trench networks used by the NVA. A combination of 750 lb 750 lbs and 500 lb high drag bombs to destroy the bunkers and collapse the trenches and napalm to destroy enemy personnel proved very effective during the Battle of TAM QUAN.

2. **(C) LESSON LEARNED:** CS is valuable in forcing the enemy from their positions.

   a. Discussion: During the Battle of TAM QUAN tremendous success was realized in employing a combination of riot control agent CS followed by artillery TOT’s. A problem occurred when the E 158 modules were dropped from below minimum altitude. The modules did not have enough time to properly activate and the desired target coverage was not achieved.

   b. Observation: The use of CS in a battle area requires detailed prior planning. Provisions must be made for packaging and delivering gas masks at the proper time to prevent unnecessary delays in the execution of the battle plan. Pilots flying the helicopters dispensing the E 158 modules must be educated in proper methods of employment, altitude, direction of flight, troop dispositions and wind-drift factors.

3. **(C) LESSON LEARNED:** Flame thrower APC’s can be effectively used to neutralize enemy fortifications.

   a. Discussion: The importance of employing flame thrower APC’s with mech infantry was brought out in the early stages of the Battle of TAM QUAN. There were several occasions where the flame tracks were able to maneuver to a position to eliminate pockets of resistance in bunkers and trenches. Had the flame throwers not been available, friendly casualties would have been considerably higher.

   b. Observation: “Flame thrower-tracks-can-be-employed-wall forward with attacking mech and infantry units with great success. With inherent mobility and armored protection, the flame tracks are...
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invaluable in the close-quarter fighting that is peculiar to the type terrain encountered in this battle.

4. (C) LESSON LEARNED: Combat Engineers should be used to follow
the infantry and destroy bunkers and trenches, improve crossing sites
for tracks and heavy equipment, and establish LZ’s for resupply and
Medevac.

a. Discussion: A need for Engineer support developed quickly
during the Battle of Tan Quien when it became apparent that the APC’s
were having difficulty getting into the area of contact. This occurred
during the first evening of the battle and plans were immediately
formulated to send engineer support into the area. The engineers
were used to construct a causeway for the APC’s, clear an LZ for
resupply and Medevac and to destroy the bunker and trench networks
in the battle areas.

b. Observation: Commanders should quickly recognize a need
for engineer support if the need does exist. It is impractical for the
infantry to carry the demolitions required to destroy all bunkers and
trenches found in a battle area when the engineers can bring in heavy
equipment to do the job. The timely clearing of an LZ is extremely
important for resupply and Medevac and there are times when crossing
sites must be made to permit access by tracked vehicles and heavy equip-
ment into the battle area.

5. (C) LESSON LEARNED: The battlefield must be policed after all
contact has ceased.

a. Discussion: The majority of weapons, documents and other
valuable intelligence items were found by units remaining in the battle
area to conduct a police of the battlefield. This time was also used
to have engineers destroy the bunkers and trenches. Each of the battle
areas were thoroughly policed after each contact and the results justified
the use of company size units to accomplish this.

b. Observation: Time must be allowed for units to remain in
areas of significant contact to conduct a thorough police of the
battlefield and destroy all fortifications.

6. (C) LESSON LEARNED: Routes of enemy egress from a major
contact area must be interdicted.

a. Discussion: The Battle of Tan Quien once again proved the
importance of surrounding the battle area with forces to inhibit and
interdict enemy movement out of the area of contact. The normal pattern
of the NVA is to fight until dark and then evade from the battle area.
Although it is impossible to block all enemy escape, many casualties
are inflicted, a psychological advantage is obtained and the enemy is
further disorganized and confused by sufficient blocking forces and
an adequate plan of blocking fires. A system was habitually used
throughout the Battle of TAM QUAN to accomplish this inhibiting maneuver while still allowing free room for fires in the contact area without endangering friendly troops.

b. Observation: Plans to contain the battle area should be made early, incorporating a system of platoon sized blocking positions, blocking fires and sufficient illumination to inhibit enemy escape from a contact area during darkness.

7. (C) LESSON LEARNED: Constant illumination is required on the battlefield during the hours of darkness.

a. Discussion: Early planning was necessary to insure that after night defensive positions were established by elements in contact, illumination was provided by a combination of UN-LH flareships, Moonshine and Spooky. The constant illumination hindered the enemy's attempt to move out of contact areas and permitted accurate artillery fires to hit his positions. Problems did occur because of the long reaction time required to get Moonshine or Spooky on station. Gaps in the periods of illumination by Moonshine and Spooky were filled by organic flareships or artillery illumination.

b. Observation: The decision to use or not use Air Force illumination should be made as early as possible after initial contact is made. This will allow sufficient time for the request to be forwarded through channels and have the aircraft on station at the required time. The Air Force aircraft have a longer station time and are much better than organic flareships for long periods of illumination. Refueling time for these aircraft can be covered by other Air Force aircraft, organic flareships or tube illumination.

8. (C) LESSON LEARNED: APC's should use colored number panels to permit easy identification from the air.

a. Discussion: There were periods when the movement and maneuver of the APC's had to be controlled from the air. It was extremely difficult to identify a specific track or tracks from the air and relay the identification to the commander on the ground. Valuable time was wasted by not being able to clearly identify elements of the mech companies from the air.

b. Observation: Colored number panels should be displayed on each APC. This will allow quick identification and permit the commander in the air to relay specific information to the commander on the ground.

9. (C) LESSON LEARNED: Units must not cordon contact areas in a manner that will deny the use of artillery and air fires.

a. Discussion: On no occasion during the Battle of TAM QUAN were units allowed to close so tightly around a contact area that the use of artillery and air fires would be severely restricted.
This would have denied the commander one of his most valuable advantages and means of neutralizing the enemy positions.

b. Observation: Commanders must insure that their units are not deployed in such a manner that it restricts the use of his most powerful punch. Casualties will be greatly reduced if units are positioned to allow maximum delivery of artillery and air fires.

10. (C) LESSON LEARNED: Clearance for air strikes in an ARVN AO must be initiated immediately.

a. Discussion: The procedure for clearing an air strike in the ARVN AO is detailed and time consuming. Requests for clearance must go through channels to the 2nd ARVN Division Hq and on one occasion it took one and a quarter hours for an immediate air strike to be delivered.

b. Observation: A procedure to expedite clearance requests in the ARVN AO was adopted. A grid is assumed in the expected area of contact and the request initiated for clearance prior to the request for air support. When the need for air fires became apparent, clearance had already been granted. This saved valuable time and allowed timely delivery of ordnance.

11. (C) LESSON LEARNED: Tanks are necessary in battles on the BONG SON Plain.

a. Discussion: It is apparent that armor would have been invaluable during the Battle of TAM QUAN. Sufficient access routes into all areas of contact were available and the use of tanks to attack the enemy fortified positions would have greatly reduced friendly casualties. The M-113 proved valuable but lack the heavy fires and armored protection of an M-48 or M-60.

b. Observation: A tank company should be attached to the 1st Bde for use in the BONG SON Plain. The availability of tanks would greatly enhance the brigade's operations and increase its flexibility and firepower while greatly decreasing vulnerability and casualties in large scale contacts.

12 (C) LESSON LEARNED: OH-13's helicopters can be effectively used to exploit a CS attack.

a. During the afternoon of 8 December the 1st Brigade Scouts, flying two (2) OH-13's observation helicopters, were employed to exploit the effects of an aerial delivered CS attack. Immediately after the CS attack, the Scout Team, with aviator and gunner/observer wearing protective masks, flew into the gassed area to observe enemy movements and to deliver effective automatic weapons fire on enemy personnel attempting to flee the area. The Scouts were able to engage several enemy troops attempting to escape the effects of the CS.
b. Observation: Scout helicopters can be effectively used to exploit a CS attack. Although visibility is restricted by the protective mask and CS cloud, a close working team of observation helicopters can exploit a gas attack.

13. (c) LESSON LEARNED: Track shrouds must be used by M 113's in crossing a fast moving body of water.

a. Discussion: On 19 and 20 December 67 a mech company moving to contact was unable to swim the BONG SON River because of the loss of maneuverability in the midstream current. The tracks did not have track shrouds mounted.

b. Observation: Had track shrouds been mounted, the M 113's might have negotiated the river and would then have been available for the attack of AN GHEP on 20 Dec.

14. (c) LESSON LEARNED: Sequence of attack on a fortified position in the BONG SON Plain.

a. Discussion: The terrain of the BONG SON Plain has been described as a combination of GUADALCANAL and the hedgerows of ENEMY. An attack against a flank is impossible because the enemy defends in a small perimeter (Outline of a fortified village). To change directions in the attack of the enemy and to engage him in two or more directions in the limited area that the enemy occupies is difficult and has several disadvantages. Attacks from several directions must be closely controlled and even then there is a good chance that casualties will be taken by friendly units from friendly small arms fire. The chief disadvantage is that this method will restrict the one big advantage of fire power in the form of artillery and air.

b. Observation: The solution to the sequence of attack of a fortified enemy position adopted by this unit in the Battle of Tan Quan is:

(1) Contact fully developed by infantry and aerial scouts to develop size and shape of enemy position.

(2) Air fires are massed to the point of complete devastation of the area by 750 lb and 500 lb High Drag (low ceiling) bombs mixed with Napalm.

(3) Artillery fires are used constantly on the enemy positions and to block enemy escape.

(4) Contact area is ringed by units in platoon sized blocking positions to inhibit enemy escape.

(5) Illumination is planned to light entire contact area for the duration of all periods of darkness.
(6) Air and artillery fires are increased in tempo prior to any attack. Riot control agent CS is used to drive the enemy out of prep-red positions into a following artillery TOT and exploitation by aerial scouts and gunships.

(7) Attacking elements are preceded by armored vehicles with flamethrower tracks and portable flamethrowers used well forward.

(8) Each attacking unit is echeloned in depth to provide follow-up units to mop up by-passed pockets of enemy resistance and to secure medevac operations and lost or damaged equipment.

(9) Engineers with heavy equipment and other maneuver units follow to conduct thorough battlefield police.
Sketch maps of contact areas are indicated in the following tabs:

- Tab A 6 Dec 67
- Tab B 7 Dec 67
- Tab C 8 to 10 Dec 67
- Tab D 11 to 14 Dec 67
- Tab E 15 to 16 Dec 67
- Tab F 19 to 20 Dec 67
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TAB A

6D DEC 67

* CONTACT

INN

SON RIVER

BONG

TRUONG LAM (2)

Binh Phu (2)

40TH ARVN

1-9 CAV

1-8 CAV

LZ ENGLISH NORTH 88

LZ ENGLISH

TAM QUAN

LZ TOM

SOUTH CHINA SEA
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