

DECLASSIFIED PER EXECUTIVE ORDER 12356, Section 3.3, NND 873541

By RB/CP NARA, Date 8-6-92

ANNUAL SUPPLEMENT

TO

THE HISTORY OF THE 1ST BRIGADE (AIRBORNE)  
1ST CAVALRY DIVISION (AIRMOBILE)  
AFO 96490

FOR THE YEAR

1 JANUARY TO 31 DECEMBER 1967

PREPARED BY

Lieutenant Theodore B. Feak

REVIEWED BY

Major Robert L. Bass  
Adjutant

1st Brigade

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The 1st Brigade, 1st Air Cavalry Division, began the year 1967 with the mission of defending the base camp at An Khe. Attache units at that time were the 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry, the 2d Battalion, 8th Cavalry, and the 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry.

The 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry had the mission of securing highway 19, through the 1st Brigade AO and conducted the mission effectively.

The 2d Battalion, 8th Cavalry was under operational control of the 2nd Brigade for OPERATION THAYER II, until 11 February 1968. OPERATION THAYER II netted 590 enemy killed, and 55 prisoners taken.

The 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry conducted base defense, developing the new technique of "tea cup" defense, which limited the enemy's capability of attack by mortar or rocket fire. This concept utilized the artillery and infantry capabilities fully, and expanded the protective limits around AN KHE to include the maximum distance of the 82mm mortar.

Recognizing that the enemy's most probable course of action is to mortar the Golf Course a new concept was adopted, on 10 November 1966, which provided an intensive patrol screen at the maximum effective 82mm mortar range from the center of the Golf Course. This patrol screen formed a "TEA CUP" around the north end of the Golf Course, with several interdiction fires delivered beyond the screen, and the area behind the screen cleared for immediate "Quick Fire." A single strand barbed wire fence 11.7 kilometers in length was constructed 1.5 kilometers out from the barrier line from Hong Cong mountain, north around

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... the fence has been surveyed, and the survey was used by the division artillery as the outer limits of "Quick Fire", thus simplifying fire coordination. Clearing the fields of fire and observation was undertaken to enhance the patrol screen, and landing zones in the vicinity of the fence were developed for rapid reinforcement of the "TEA CUP" during darkness.

The Brigade changed commanders on 13 April 1967. Colonel James C. Smith turned the "ALL THE WAY" brigade over to Colonel Donald V. Rattan.

On 13 February, the 1st Brigade began OPERATION PERSHING in the BONG SON Plain with the mission of destroying the VC and NVA infrastructure. The first days of the operation were punctuated by the actions at TUY AN and LIEU AN, on 18 February, TAN AN, on 27 February, and HY VAN, on 19 March,. These actions netted 161 enemy killed and 7 prisoners taken.

Even with the large body count, the operations were not as successful as they could have been, due to the lack of continuous contact which allowed the enemy to escape and carry off his dead and wounded. In this light, to beef up the brigade's capability, the Division placed A(-), 1st Battalion, 69th Armor under the brigade's operation control on 30 March.

This Armored Unit force was committed in toto to tactical operations on the BONG SON Plain, and greatly enhanced the effectiveness of the Infantry Maneuver Units. Subsequent operations revealed that the tank was most effectively used with a platoon sized force.

Medium tanks in conjunction with search and clear operations are extremely effective against fortified positions. However there are considerations that the commander must take into account when utilizing tank units. One of the

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most important factor is that of trafficability. During the dry seasons and the latter stages of the rice growing cycle, the M-48 can move across the rice paddies with a certain amount of ease. In spite of this ease of movement, the tanks are restricted to crossing sites along the numerous streams that flow through the area. During the period when the rice paddies are flooded, trafficability is greatly restricted. Careful reconnaissance must be conducted of the routes to be taken.

Once contact is made and our forces encounter strong resistance, the procedure of pulling back or out of the village and calling for supporting fires causes our forces to lose the initiative and spirit of battle and permits the enemy to regroup and/or attempt to escape from the village. Therefore, once contact has been established with enemy elements, every effort must be attempted to maintain it, while other elements and supporting fires are maneuvered to destroy and/or cut off his routes of escape.

The initial mission of the Brigade remained in effect during OPERATION PERSHING until 1 June, when the Brigade received the mission of providing fixed base security to LZ ENGLISH, LZ LARAMIE, LZ WILLIE, LZ TWO BITS, and bridges in the BONG SON Plain, with the 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry and the 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry.

The Brigade conducted its mission of destroying the enemy and establishing coordination with the National Police Field Force units.

The National Police Field Force operations were initiated during the year. These operations are conducted with regular Infantry units to move into villages, gather the people together, interrogate them, and remove the

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enemy's capability to build himself into a village, and made him unstable in his own "ground", the village.

Heavy contact was established and decisive victories were won in the Battles of AN QUI (30 May - 1 June), BING DE (20 June), and TUY AN (2-3 July) by the Brigade.

From 30 May to 1 June 1967, the 1st Brigade fought the 9th Battalion, 22d Regiment, 3d NVA Division in the BONG SON Plain, in the village of AN QUI.

Fought by the 2d Battalion, 8th Cavalry, the battle commenced when one platoon of D Company was sent to check the village of HOI AN. When the platoon crossed an open area toward the village, automatic weapons fire cut down five members of the platoon, killing two.

To reinforce the units in contact, the Brigade Commander drew on the 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry to provide C Company. Company C landed in the area of contact shortly after dark. Air strikes, artillery and ARA, were employed throughout the night. A morning sweep through the village revealed that the enemy had withdrawn and the 2d Battalion, 8th Cavalry deployed the two companies toward AN QUI (1) and AN QUI (2), and called on the section of tanks from the 1st Battalion, 69th Armor to reinforce.

C Company, 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry approached AN QUI (1) from the southwest, with one platoon entering the hamlet from the south and the other two platoons entering along the southwestern corner of the hamlet. The southern platoon made immediate contact, and was supported in the drive by Company A, 1st Battalion, 9th Cavalry gunships.

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the company commander decided to push over this strip to attack in the morning. Throughout the night friendly air strikes, CS, ARA, and artillery firers continued to point the enemy positions.

The next morning, C Company and the tank platoon entered the village and counted 98 NVA killed, and took three prisoners. American casualties were 10 KIA and 35 WIA.

This battle taught the Brigade that when a unit becomes involved in a fire fight, every should be maintain contact and develop the situation. Unless a "toehold" is retained in the hamlet, the enemy regains the initiative and is afforded the opportunity to improve his fighting configuration in previously prepared positions. CS gas proved to be extremely effective when employed in conjunction with a ground attack. The gas renders the enemy ineffective for approximately 15 minutes after the gas is dispensed.

Armor was extremely effective against fortified positions, not only because of firepower but also due to the fact that infantry could move into enemy positions with a minimum casualties by utilizing the tanks as cover. Each platoon sized unit, it was learned, in the contact area (except those actually fighting in the hamlet) should display a facilitate identification and control.

The village of TUY AN was the location where the 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry fought a large scale battle with an element of the 8th Battalion, 22d NVA Regiment. The friendly force was composed of A Company, 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry, with a platoon of tanks from A Company, 1st Battalion, 69th Armor,

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As the forces approached the village, the land platoon came under intensive fire, and engage the enemy who were hidden behind hedgerows. The fierce firefight lasted for 20 minutes, but after that the enemy broke, leaving approximately 20 dead. 1st Cavalry losses were 3 KIA and 10 WIA.

The initial action in the morning was accompanied by tank action, which disrupted the defensive posture of the enemy.

Afternoon fighting consisted of air strikes, artillery, ARA and Go-CO, along with CS to neutralize the enemy's defensive posture.

The attacking forces took the complex of hills and the village by 4 July, having driven the enemy out, and counted 86 NVA KIA, while capturing 3 VC Prisoners, sustaining 15 friendly KIA, and 39 WIA.

The 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry planned a cordon and search operation on 19 June for execution at 0300H 20 June in the village of BINH DE. A, B, and D Companies advanced to the village and completed the cordon at 0330H. At that time, contact was established with approximately a company sized unit composed of mixed NVA and VC, believed to be elements of the 7th and 9th Battalions, 22d NVA Regiment, 2d NVA Division. C Company was air assaulted to reinforce, and along with eight tanks of A Company, 1st Battalion, 69th Armor which joined the company on the ground launched an attack which resulted in 42 enemy KIA. The company encountered the most extensive network of defensive positions that had been found by the brigade up to that time. US casualties were 29 WIA.

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These battles were characterized by the unit remaining in contact with the enemy and using all available fire support, to include CS gas. While the initial unit remained in contact, other units were air assaulted in to reinforce the unit, and all available tanks were deployed to the contact area. In these battles, the unit in contact attacked and overwhelmed the enemy force prior to darkness, so that he could not break contact.

As enemy contact waned, the Brigade assumed a posture of area control, targeting the NVA, VC, and local guerilla infrastructure in the BONG SON Plain, and exercising population and resources control.

It was during this period that the Brigade initiated "Snatch" Operations to exert further control over enemy forces in the BONG SON Plain. The "Snatch" operation employs an aerial scout section conducting reconnaissance using irregular patterns and a rifle platoon with a team of NPFF on standby.

The operation commences as the scout section locates groups of people congregated together. Once the "hunting phase" is completed by the rifle platoon with the NPFF team is moved by air to the target area, inserted on the ground, and gathers all individuals at a central location for interrogation by the NPFF team. Any suspect discovered is evacuated for further interrogation.

The Brigade employed tactics to destroy the NVA/VC main force units and decimate the VC infrastructure while constantly keeping the enemy forces off balance, as discussed below.

Significant use of cordon and search, in conjunction with NPFF operations, snatch operations, and the use of extensive psychological operations proved to be effective in destroying the VC infrastructure.

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The GVN presidential election and the GVN lower house elections were held on 3 September and 22 October respectively. During the election period, the Brigade was required to intensify ground operations and aerial surveillance to develop maximum security for the BONG SON Plain area by the date of the election, and to assist in repelling any attacks on GVN installations. The frequency and intensity of cordon and search operations, snatch operations and search operations were increased to stop enemy attempts to disrupt the election process. Also, employment of the "Swooper" operation, which is a larger scale snatch operation, usually involving a pre-designated target, proved to be effective in thwarting enemy operations.

Significant contact was established six times during the fall months, with the attack of D Company, 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry (22 Aug), the Cordon and Search of LIEU AN (1) by Company D, 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry (6 Sept), the search and destroy operation of B Company, 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry (17 Sept), Cordon and search of AN QUI (1) by Company B, 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry (20 Sept),

Attack on Brigade 14-3, Company A, 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry (24 Sept), and Aerial Surveillance and Exploration, Company C, 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry (25 Oct). These contacts with character like quick reaction, maximum use of firepower, and sustained contact with the enemy before he broke away. The enemy lost a total of 86 KIA, while friendly forces lost 3 KIA, and 15 WIA.

On 12 October, the Brigade received OPCON of two provincial platoons and a control headquarters element from the 1st Battalion, 50th Mechanized. This unit became a quick reaction force to reinforce any US/ARVN installations in the brigade area in case of attack.

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The Brigade employed "Hunter-Killer Teams" during the hours of darkness utilizing fire, five rifleman with starlight scopes and one radio (optional). These teams are assigned areas to operate in with a mission to find, engage, and destroy the enemy force encountered. Assistance can be obtained if the force encountered is beyond the means of the "Hunter Killer Teams."

The Kit Carson Scout program was fully implemented in the Brigade during the month of September 1967. Ten scouts were assigned to subordinate maneuver battalions. These individuals have proven marginally effective in ferreting out enemy locations and caches, identifying VC, performing field interrogations and assisting in control of detainees. The scout's performance of duty has improved with time, and it is expected that they will be of significant value in the future. The personnel for the Kit Carson Scout program are Vietnamese personnel.

The Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol program was organized and one platoon was placed OPCON to the Brigade. Through teamwork, a rapport and understanding was developed among the Brigade, its subordinate Battalions and the Long Range Reconnaissance Patrols (LRRP). This led to better trained, more valuable LRRP's and a more prompt reaction by Brigade combat elements to LRRP reports.

"Hunter-Killer" teams, and the "Bushmaster Operations" proved effective, as the enemy began adapting his modus operandi to our tactics. He would move out of the village early, before a cordon and search could be established. To counter this tactic, Friendly Forces began to set up ambushes along likely avenues of escape. Also, when a village was suspected of supporting VC, teams

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of men would wait for him to go into or come from the village. These operations kept the enemy in a state of confusion, causing his planning to be ineffective, and keeping him psychologically off balance.

From 12 November to 26 November, the 1st Brigade participated in OPERATION MACARTHUR in the area near MAK TO. With the infantry of the 2d Battalion, 8th Cavalry and the 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry, supported by the 2d Battalion, 19th Artillery and the 2d Battalion, 20th Artillery (ARA\_.

The 1st Brigade began with the primary mission of blocking enemy infiltration and exfiltration in its assigned AO and to find and destroy the enemy. The Brigade was OPCON to the 4th Infantry Division, in SPAACZ AO, near DAK TO.

The 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry was tasked to combat assault into the northern portion of the assigned Brigade AO, established a firebase and conduct operations to search and destroy the enemy. The 2d Battalion, 8th Cavalry was tasked to provide one rifle company to secure the Brigade forward Command Post, and to provide two rifle companies OPCON to the 4th Infantry Division to operate in the vicinity of DAK TO and to assist in security of that installation.

After the initial combat action at DAK TO, the 2d Battalion, 8th Cavalry was returned to the 1st Brigade, and assigned the AO south and east of enemy contact in the ridgeland around DAK TO. The contact there was with an estimated NVA battalion sized force, and the area was secured by 21 November.

The 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry air assaulted southwest of KON TUM, just north of the PLEI MRONG SF Camp on 22 November. The battalion assisted the SF Camp by controlling lidt to insert a ready reaction force from the camp to aid a ,

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CIDG unit in heavy contact.

In OPERATION MACARTHUR, the enemy lost 17 KIA to the 1st Brigade, while the Brigade losses were 5 KIA, and 17 WIA.

As Colonel Donald V. Rattan, Brigade Commander, expressed it: "This operation provided a stringgent test and acted as an invaluable training vehicle for all elements of the Task Force.....Much of the fat collected since February was forcibly trimmed from the Brigade during the operation. The responsiveness, sence of urgency, cooperation and full accomplishment of all missions by all elements of the Brigade were outstanding and most gratifying."

OPERATION MACARTHUR demonstrated the need for all units to keep trim, constantly revising movement plans, being prepared to move on short notice. Also, priorities were reestablished on materials and sections to be moved, as it was discovered what units were needed, and not needed, and when they were needed. For example, the Communications section had a low priority, yet it was discovered that the need of experienced communications personnel, and necessary material, was pressing when moving into a new area. These were valuable lessons.

As the year ended, the 1st Airborne Brigade continued operations in the PERSHING AO, having returned from OPERATION MACARTHUR by 25 November. Aggressive and intensive operations throughout the BONG SON Plain, the AN LAO Valley, the coastal highland, and the northern CAY CIEP Mountains characterized the Brigade operations.

From the afternoon of 6 December to 20 December, the 1st Brigade battled the NVA in TAM QUAN. The task force consisted of the 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry, Companies A, B, and D of the 1st Battalion, 50th Mechanized, 2d Battalion,

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~~8th Cavalry, 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry.~~

The enemy was composed of elements of the 22d NVA Regiment, to include RHQ unit. The concept of operations directed that the contact with the enemy units must be maintained, but if lost, immediate pursuit must be executed by fire, aerial surveillance and by maneuver units.

The action began on 6 December as Company B, 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry air assaulted into TAM QUAN and was joined on the ground by Company A, 1st Battalion, 50th Mechanized, attacking from the east. The night was illuminated as the company remained on position, having been unable to completely penetrate the heavy defenses and thick brush.

In the morning, a CS preparatory fire by ARA hit the contact area, followed by an artillery TOT. Company A joined the attack, along with Company C. In the first attack, enemy resistance held back the Skytroopers, but after pulling back and saturating the area with CS, ARA, artillery and air strikes, the units moved back in with flame throwing APC's.

Still the fire was intense, even though the front lines of the enemy defenses had been broken. The next day, 8 December, C Company relieved B Company in the contact area, and three companies assaulted on the heels of intensive CS, ARA, and Artillery TOT's sweeping the area clear of resistance, except for snipers and individual soldiers left behind.

The enemy had fled, but the 1st Cavalry units continued to search him out on the BONG SON Plain. The southern screening force was the 40th ARVN Regiment. One unit came under attack on 9 December, but the enemy unit

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was repulsed. On 10 December, the 40th ARVN Regiment reported that civilians were fleeing the village of TRUONG LAM. Company B, 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry air assaulted the village and was joined by Company D, 1st Battalion, 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry and Company B, 1st Battalion, 50th Mechanized. Company B, 1st Battalion, 50th Mechanized began to search the village and came in contact with small arms and automatic weapons fire. Company C, 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry air assaulted at 1220 H, to close the left flank. Three coordinate 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 nightfall, the companies broke contact and established their night positions while artillery continued to hit the enemy positions throughout the night.

The forces of Companies A and D, 2d Battalion, 8th Cavalry were air assaulted to block enemy escape routes in the CAY GIEM Mountains. On 11 December, 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry assaulted the village, meeting sporadic resistance. The ambush element of the 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry had sporadic contact.

On 15 December, the 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry moved into an area that was NVA inhabited, according to intelligence reports, and made heavy contact. The 1st Battalion, 50th Mechanized aided, and the companies succeeded in penetrating the enemy's outer defenses. Again artillery and air strikes were called in and the 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry deployed into blocking positions. The 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry assaulted and drove the enemy out of his strongholds. Contact continued on 19 December, following the same basic tactics.

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Malaria was not considered a serious problem for the Brigade, as continued command emphasis kept the malaria rate low.

In the early months, problems were experienced with immersion foot, due to the heavy amounts of rain and inadequate time for the combat troops to properly air their feet. This problem decreased with command emphasis, and the ease of the rainy season.

Logistics were a continued item of command interest. The major move in OPERATION MACARTHUR pointed out the definite need for an established operation procedure on logistical moves, and the reevaluation of items that can be carried by the units and to be supplied from the logistical command.

Barrier material was a continued shortage for the brigade, with few other problems in the logistics field.<sup>26</sup>

It was a "job well done" for the Officers and men of the Brigade during the year. In recognition of their courageous acts, members of the Brigade won a total of 168 Silver Stars and Seven Distinguished Service Crosses for their valor during the year.

The 1st Brigade ended the year controlling the BONG SON Plain, having established security for the people of the area against Communist Aggression.