

31

CONFIDENTIAL

AVDDC-OP

2 February 1968

SUBJECT: Combat Operations After Action Report

1. Name of Operation: Battle of PHU NHIEU.

2. Date of Operation: 170800H to 171800H January 1968.

3. Location: PHU NHIEU (1) Hamlet, Quan Binh Son District, Quang Ngai Province, RVN.

4. Command and Control Headquarters:

a. 1st Battalion, 14th Infantry. This operation was coordinated with an operation by the 1st Battalion, 52nd Infantry.

b. Reporting Officers:

(1) LTC George L. Ball, CO 1-14th Inf.

(2) CPT Albert D. Carter CO A/1-14th Inf.

(3) 1LT Bruce G. Shipley CO B/1-14th Inf.

(4) CPT Robert R. Vaughn CO C/1-14 Inf.

(5) CPT Harold E. Sells CO D/1-14 Inf.

(6) 1LT Terry E. Bender Rec Plat/1-14th Inf.

5. Task Organization:

a. Company A, 1st Battalion, 14th Infantry.

b. Company B, 1st Battalion, 14th Infantry.

c. Company C, 1st Battalion, 14th Infantry.

d. Company D, 1st Battalion, 14th Infantry.

e. Reconnaissance Platoon, 1st Battalion, 14th Infantry.

6. Supporting Forces:

a. Artillery fire support was provided by B Btry, 2nd Battalion, 9th Artillery and A Btry, 3rd Battalion, 18th Artillery. Although only 85 rounds of 105mm ammunition were expended during the LZ preparation after an unexpected change in the landing zone, the fire was characterized by a high degree of accuracy and flexibility.

Inclosure 3

CONFIDENTIAL

3 - 1

32

CONFIDENTIAL

38

AVDDC-OP

2 February 1968

SUBJECT: Combat Operations After Action Report

B. The 123rd, 174th, and 176th Assault Helicopter Companies provided aerial surveillance, troop lift, and armed helicopter support. In addition, HHC, 3d Brigade Aviation Section provided OH-23 observation helicopter (armed) support. The armed helicopters and the OH-23's operated under the control of airborne and ground commanders.

c. 3d Brigade Aviation Section OH-23's were armed with two (2) M-60 machineguns each and furnished the ground commanders with suppressive fires and immediate information on the enemy's location, movement, and weapons capabilities. They engaged and killed a total of seven (7) VC.

7. Intelligence:

Intelligence reports received during the planning stages for the search and destroy operation to be conducted on 17 January 1968, indicated that the 95th LF Company was operating in the hills, vic BS692875. On 14 January 1968, the Binh Son District Headquarters reported that the 95th LF Company was located in An Thinh (2) Hamlet, BS725896. Based on this information, An Thinh (2) was designated as the objective area. The 95th Company was reported to have a strength of 100 men equipped with 81mm mortars, 2 LMG's and assorted small arms. It was anticipated that when US forces entered the area the enemy would hide in the ditches and hedgerows and fire on the advance elements. As US forces closed on the village, the enemy was expected to withdraw and try to evade to the north or south along the coast and hide in the many bunkers and holes within An Thinh. A combat assault was planned on the high ground about three and one half kilometers from the objective, An Thinh (2). Elements from A and B Companies, 1st Battalion 52nd Infantry were to occupy blocking positions along the beach and the high ground north of An Thinh (2). Elements designated for the combat assault were B Company, 1st Battalion, 14th Infantry and the Reconnaissance Platoon 1-14th Infantry. The initial contact was initiated by VC employing BAR and LMG fire on A/1-52nd Infantry at approximately 0815H. Because of this contact, a new landing zone was selected, closer to the objective area. The elements on the landing zone did not receive any contact. However, as the Reconnaissance Platoon moved 200 meters to the southeast they received automatic weapons fire and several M-79 rounds or hand grenades. The enemy was hiding in trench lines concealed by thick hedgerows along trails and villages, and the Battle of PHU NHIEU ensued. Almost immediately, the enemy troops were observed from the air by an aerial observer in an armed OH-23 helicopter. OH-23's engaged the enemy at hedgerow level and inflicted many casualties and created a great deal of confusion among the enemy. As the maneuver elements of B Company and the Reconnaissance Platoon of the 1st Battalion, 14th Infantry engaged the confused enemy, the VC became disorganized and fled from the area of contact to hide in the many bunkers and hedgerows in the vicinity of PHU NHIEU (1), PHU NHIEU (2) and PHU NHIEU (3). The Battle of PHU NHIEU then became one of searching the hamlets, house by

3 - 2
CONFIDENTIAL

33

CONFIDENTIAL

2 February 1968

house, hedgerow by hedgerow, and bunker by bunker. The enemy had to be flushed from their hiding places or killed in them. In the action there were eight prisoners taken; among them an acting platoon leader. Interrogation of these prisoners indicated that the enemy had elements of four Local Force Companies involved in the Battle of PHU NHIEU. The units identified were the 95th LF Company, P31 LF Company, 21st LF Sapper Company and the T18th LF Company. The total approximate strength of the enemy units engaged in the Battle of PHU NHIEU was 240 men. The prisoners stated they were in the PHU NHIEU area to train for an attack on an unknown area, possibly an RD Hamlet, in the vicinity of PHU NHIEU within the next ten (10) days. The man documents found on the enemy bodies and in the area of contact verified the units involved in the battle were subordinates to the Bihh Son Viet Cong District Headquarters. The intelligence reports that were received in the planning for this operation were considered accurate and timely. This information was sufficient to insure that the friendly elements around PHU NHIEU were deployed in a position that contributed to the overall success of the operation. The results of this successful operation are reflected in PAR 10C.

8. Mission:

A/1-14th Infantry and C/1-14th Infantry were to conduct screening missions on the high ground west of the original landing zone. A/1-52nd(-), and B/1-52nd Infantry (-), and D/1-14th Inf were assigned missions of establishing blocking positions. Later D/1-14th Infantry received a change of mission to conduct search and destroy operations and conduct a village sweep.

9. Concept of Operation:

a. B/1-14th Infantry and the Hcn Plat were to conduct a combat assault to an LZ vic BS693880 and conduct search and destroy operations on 2 axis to the east of Objective 1 (An Thinh, 2), vic BS73C892. (See Annex A). D/1-14th Infantry conducted a combat assault on 160845H Jan 68, to an LZ vic BS878857 and conducted search and destroy operations on the Batangan Peninsula. They established blocking positions vic BS738877 and BS73C880 at 170800H Jan 68. A/1-14th Infantry and C/1-14th Infantry were given missions to conduct screening missions vic BS655865 and BS685835 overlooking exfiltration routes from the area of expected contact. A/1-52cd Infantry(-) occupied blocking positions along with B/1-52nd Infantry(-) along the northern boundary of AO GRANT vic BS729898, BS725896, and BS708888.

10. Execution:

a. Based on available current intelligence, a plan was formulated to combat assault suspected enemy locations. Blocking positions were selected by 1st Bn, 52nd Inf in conjunction with this plan. Complete coordination was

3 - 3

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

40

2 February 1968

finalized prior to the combat assault of B/1-14th and Rcn Platoon.

b. At 170815H Jan 68 vic BS725895 (An Thinh, 1), A/1-52nd reported receiving BAR and LMG fire. Due to the immediate tactical situation, the LZ for Bravo Company was changed at 170830H Jan 68 to a location recommended after a hasty aerial reconnaissance by the Battalion S2. At the same time, the Battalion CO was briefing the flight leaders and the Battery Commander on the conduct of the operation at LZ UPTIGHT. The ground forces, artillery fire support, airlift aircraft, as well as the supporting armed helicopters responded quickly to the last minute change in the landing zone.

c. Upon entering the landing zone, all maneuver elements deployed according to the original plan. At this time, "Aloha" OH-23 aircraft entered the area of operation after being briefed at the Battalion TOC on LZ UPTIGHT. The Reconnaissance Platoon moved from the landing zone as planned and made contact in a hedgerow south of the LZ. They received two grenades from the hedgerow. "Aloha" immediately moved to the area of contact. Enroute to the area "Aloha" C6 and C4 observed numerous VC running in a trench line south of PHU NHIEU vic BS713884. They immediately engaged the enemy with M-60 MG's. Armed helicopter support of the combat assault immediately joined them and placed accurate suppressive fires on the enemy. Bravo Company and the Reconnaissance Platoon continued execution of the original plan and closed quickly with the VC located in the trench line. Upon entering the enemy trench line the Rcn platoon found numerous bunkers which would take considerable time to clear by physically entering each bunker. Realizing the time necessary to eliminate each bunker, LTC Ball placed the Delta 30 Platoon OPCON to Bravo Company and gave them a mission of blocking vic BS723877. Plans were made to lift the Delta 20 Platoon from LZ UPTIGHT to a secure LZ on the beach to link up with Delta 10 and sweep An Thinh (1). Bravo 6 took operational control of Delta 30.

Artillery support during the entire combat operation was limited due to the close proximity of friendly units and numerous aircraft over the contact area.

Close fighting along the trench line and hedgerow took a drastic turn as many of the enemy broke from the trench system into the open. They were immediately engaged by elements of B/1-14th and killed. Captives were used as tunnel rats. Exploitation of the tunnels continued throughout the day and the objective area was swept by elements of the Delta Company. The 3d Platoon of Delta reverted to its parent unit. Bravo Company continued police of the battle field until dark and set up a Company perimeter on the nearest defensive terrain. All companies were alerted for movement along trails in the area. Battlefield police continued on 18 January, and all bunkers were re-entered and destroyed. The results of the days of contact were very significant and are as follows:

3 - 4
CONFIDENTIAL

35

CONFIDENTIAL

2 February 1968

41

FRIENDLY LOSSES

3 US WIA

ENEMY LOSSES

80 VC KIA

7 VC POW

1 CD/POW

ENEMY EQUIPMENT LOSSES

10 US M1 Cal .30 Rifles

7 US M1 Cal .30 Carbines

4 US M2 Cal .30 Carbines

4 US BaR Cal .30

1 M-79 Grenade Launcher

1 Thompson SMG Cal .45

2 MAT 49 SMG

1 NVR 50 SMG

4 AK-47 Assault Rifles

2 Pistols Cal .45

137 Chicom Hand Grenades

16 60mm Mortar Rounds

2000 Rounds Cal .30 Ammunition

500 Rounds Cal 7.62 Short Ammunition

500 Rounds Cal .30 Carbine Ammunition

100 Rounds Cal .45 Ammunition

50 Rounds 9mm Ammunition

3 B-40 Rockets w/fuses

CONFIDENTIAL

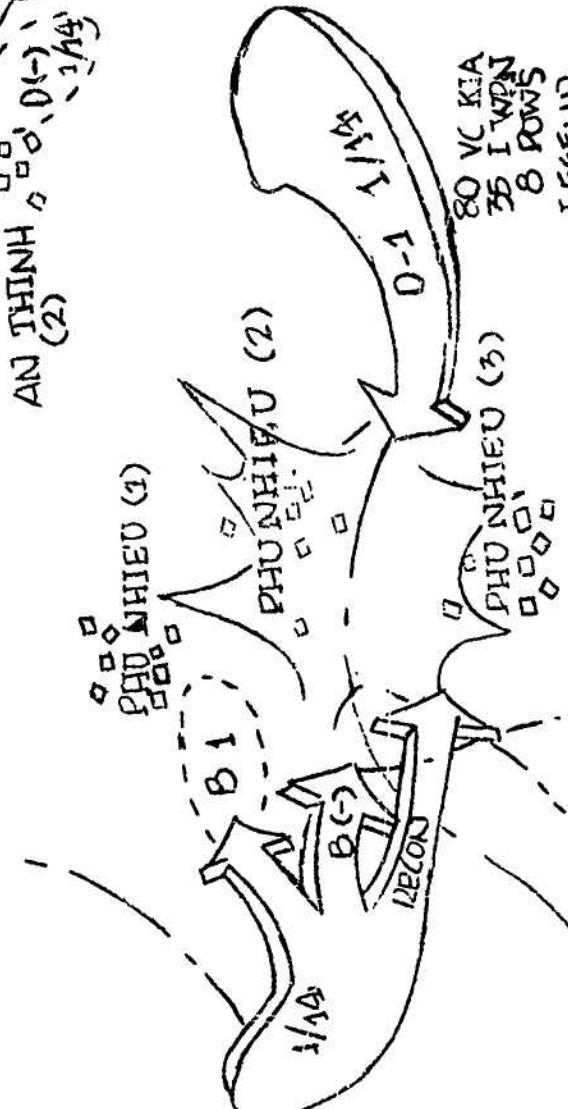
36

AO GRANT
17-18 JAN 68

CONFIDENTIAL

A-1/52
B-1/52
AN THINH (2)
D(-) 1/14

SOUTH CHINA SEA



CONFIDENTIAL

LEGEND

- Contour Lines
- - - Blocking Positions
- - - Trench Line
- Bunkers
- Screening Positions

37

"S-1/14"