

AVDE-IJ

3 March 1968

SUBJECT: Combat After Action Report (FS/PB JAGER) 25 Feb 68

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS
5TH BATTALION, 60TH INFANTRY (M)
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96307

THRU: Commanding Officer
1st Brigade
9th Infantry Division
APO 96371
ATTN: S3

TO: Commanding General
9th Infantry Division
ATTN: G3 (R & E)
APO 96371

1. (C) Name or Identity and/or type of operation: Defense of FS/PB JAGER.
2. (C) Date of Operation: 25 Feb 1968.
3. (C) Location: FS/PB JAGER XS355495, 14 Km E of Cai Lay, Dinh Tuong Province.
4. (C) Command Headquarters: Headquarters, 5th Battalion, 60th Infantry (Mech).
5. (C) Reporting Officer: Major Rocco Negriss.
6. (C) Task Organization:

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B/5-60
C/5-60 (-)
1 plat A/2-39
1 plat B/15 Engr (reinforced)
B/1-84 Arty

7. (C) Supporting Forces:

A/2-39 (1 plat and attached 1 plat C/5-60)
C/2-39
A/1-11 Arty (105mm HOW) (DS)
A/3-34 Arty (105mm HOW) (GS)
A/2-35 Arty (155mmHOW) (GS)
7th USAF
Gun ships (Crusader 9)
Medevac helicopters

8. (C) Intelligence: No hard intelligence was available; however, intelligence trends indicate that the following enemy units had been reported in the operational area.

261 MF Bn
263 MF Bn
265 MF Bn
514 LF Bn

9. (C) Mission: The 5th Bn, 60th Infantry (M) is to defend FS/PB JAGER and to prevent the Viet Cong interdiction of East-West Highway #4, from coordinates XS330503 to XS472478.

10. (C) Concept of operation: Deployment of friendly units for accomplishment of assigned missions on 24-25 Feb is as indicated in enclosures #1 and #2.

11. (C) Execution: On the evening of 24-25 Feb the disposition of friendly forces at FS/PB JAGER was as shown on enclosure #2.

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The terrain in the area was typical flat rice paddy with low rice straw growth and perpendicular dikes which afforded concealment and cover for the enemy. Two triple concertina wires were laid around the position with about 20-30 meters between them. An entrance gate was located on the northern edge of the perimeter. 27 APC's and command tracks were deployed within the perimeter. These had been in use during the day for reconnaissance in force and roadrunner operation and for deploying ambush patrols along Highway #4. Four 155 howitzers were emplaced as shown on enclosure #2. Also present in the FS/PB was a 30 man combat engineer team with 6 dump trucks, a front loader and a lowboy with tractor. The majority of these engineer elements were deployed along the northwest and north perimeter primarily in Company B's area. These engineer elements were placed at FS/PB JAGER to increase the speed with which highway #4 could be reopened each morning. At first light elements would work east and west from the FS/PB to check and repair, if necessary, the highway. The strength of the forces in the FS/PB was approximately 210, including Infantry, Artillery and Engineer elements.

At about 0150 hours the southern LP (C/5-60) reported seeing through their starlight scope about 20 VC approaching their position. The LP was pulled into the perimeter and defcons immediately fired. A platoon size RRF (C/5-60) mounted in 4 APC's was ordered out the north entrance and clockwise around the perimeter to check the southern area. When this RRF reached the northeast edge of the perimeter, it was immediately engaged by a VC force approximately 50 meters from the barbed wire. The lead APC was hit by RPG fire and began burning. This appeared to trigger the attack and heavy enemy contact generally developed around the perimeter with the heaviest ground attacks coming from the east, the southwest and the northwest. Immediately an intensive number of RPG rockets were fired resulting in both the Company B and C command tracks being destroyed. (Note: it was later determined that the Company B Commander was killed during the initial exchange). The Battalion Command Radio Frequency was also jammed at this time and Battalion control was switched to the Company B frequency. The Battalion alternate frequency was used to call for and control air strikes, flare ships, gun ships and dust offs.

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Defcons were initially ordered to fire to the south and southwest and later to the east and northwest. Gun ships were requested from Dong Tam, Spooky was requested and also an air strike. Spooky was not available but a flare ship was sent on station. At approximately 0225 hours the Bn Recon Plat, located 3 kilometers to the east at FB HESSON, XS383494, was ordered to immediately reinforce and counterattack around the perimeter on the eastern side since this was the only verified point of heavy contact. At approximately 0240 hours the 1st Brigade Commander, ordered the 2-39 to reinforce with A/2-39 mounted on 4 APC's OPCON to 2-39 and to follow this with C/2-39 dismounted.

The Recon Plat which was ordered to reinforce responded with 7 APC's and departed HESSON at approximately 0230 hours. The platoon moved quickly and reconned by fire against suspected ambush sites. Approximately 1000 meters east (XS367496) of the north entrance road to FS/PB JAGER, the Recon Plat received SA, AW and RPG fire from both sides of the east-west Highway #4. The first 5 APC's charged through the position to continue their mission, but the sixth was stopped by a hit from an RPG. This vehicle blocked the seventh APC and both rear tracks became engaged with the VC and sustained immediate casualties.

The 5 remaining Recon Plat tracks which broke through the VC (estimated to be a reinforced platoon) arrived approximately 0250 hours and moved into a position on the left (east) side of the platoon (C/5-60) which was still in heavy contact and unable to move. When the Recon Plat joined the C/5-60 element, the combined force was then able to proceed slowly clockwise around the defensive perimeter. This appeared to be the turning point, verified by the unusually high number of VC bodies and weapons located outside this sector of the perimeter.

Due to the Company B Commander being initially killed it was not known that the VC had breached two strands of triple concertina wire on the northwest and had penetrated to the first line of bunkers where they were killed. In the early stages it was reported by the RTO that the Company B Commander had been wounded. Later the Company B Artillery LNO assumed temporary command and verified that the former

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CO was dead. The S3 Air was then sent to command the unit.

To prevent the enemy from reinforcing their elements on the east, the defcons were shifted to the southwest and northwest and the air strike (napalm and bombs) was employed to the east at approximately 0410 hours. During the second pass a CBC drop was employed to the south while the defcons were shifted to the east, southwest and northwest. (Note: the type aircraft used was - F100's).

When the LFT arrived at approximately 0240 hours, the artillery fires inhibited its immediate use on the perimeter. It was then sent to assist the two Recon Platoon tracks that were in contact with the VC and also to assist in a dust off at that point. The gun ships were later employed against likely avenues of enemy egress primarily along a stream junction located in the southwest corner (XS343476).

At 0255 hours A/2-39, mounted on 4 APC's, departed FS/PB FELS (XS294496) to reinforce JAGER. This force consisted of a rifle company headquarters and 2 rifle platoons. While proceeding east along Highway #4 this force was engaged by the VC at XS344512. A short fire fight developed and 5 VC were killed. The VC then withdrew permitting the unit to continue east. The company arrived at approximately 0330 hours and was immediately ordered to the southwest edge of the perimeter, but by this time enemy contact had subsided. The company was subsequently sent to follow and assist the counter-attacking force around the eastern edge of the perimeter. This was primarily done to prevent the VC from recovering bodies and weapons.

C/2-39 (-) was also sent as a dismounted reinforcing element from FS/PB FELS. At approximately 0415 hours this unit arrived at XS330512 and was ordered to immediately sweep south through the wood line in an effort to contact withdrawing VC. This force proceeded about 400 meters south and then was ordered to sweep toward FS/PB JAGER. Negative contact was made and the unit arrived at FS/PB JAGER at approximately 0530 hours. From approximately 0415 hours to 0500 hours the action was sporadic with enemy contact completely broken by roughly 0515 hours.

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To regress slightly, four (4) ambush patrols were assigned positions as indicated on enclosure #1. When the attack on FS/PB JAGER started, these patrols were initially ordered to remain in position rather than move and be engaged by friendly reinforcing elements. When the Recon Platoon was engaged by a VC force at XS367496, ambush C-1 was ordered to reinforce the two APC's that remained at that location. Subsequently ambush C-2 was ordered to proceed to the A/2-39 area of contact (XS344512) and then to move into the FS/PB. The other two (2) ambush patrols remained as positioned until daylight hours. (Note: the majority of all times, except the initial contact, are approximate since all TOC personnel were either involved in fighting or conducting personal liaison trips for the Battalion Commander. No log was kept of the activities. Only by conducting an after-action study were the times approximated.)

12. (C) Results:

a. Friendly:

19 KIA
1 MIA (body recovered, but awaits final identification)
69 WIA
9 APC's destroyed
1 1/4 T truck destroyed
1 5-T dump truck destroyed
2 155mm Howitzers slightly damaged

b. Enemy:

97 VC KIA (BC)
1 POW (WIA)
47 VC KIA (poss)
22 AK 47's
5 AK 50's
6 Russian light machine guns
7 RPG-2 rocket launchers
1 RPG-7 rocket launcher
2 AN/PRC 10 radios

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- 1 M-60
- 1 Thompson SMG
- 1 M-79
- 1 45 cal pistol
- 2 carbines
- 10 bangalore torpedoes
- 20 RPG-2 or 7 rounds
- 1 turtle mine
- Assorted web gear, documents and gas masks.

13. (C) Administrative Matters:

a. Supply: Re-supply was requested through 1st Brigade channels but was not required during the hours of darkness. Re-supply was effected at first light.

b. Maintenance: N/A.

c. Treatment, evacuation and hospitalization of casualties:

Casualties were immediately treated consistent with the number of casualties and the aidman available. Dust offs were requested and the first completed at approximately 0500 hours. The casualties were segregated so the more seriously wounded were evacuated first.

d. Transportation: N/A

e. Communication: Excellent except that the Battalion Command frequency was jammed and the B and C company command APC's were destroyed.

14. (C) Special Equipment and Techniques:

a. The employment of the APC's in the counterattacking role significantly contributed to the defeat of the main enemy threat that had approached within 50 meters of the eastern perimeter. The rapid, shock-action combined with the flexible maneuverability of the APC's

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permitted the commander to counterattack with the Recon Plat. Conversely, the close-in fighting and the effectiveness of the RPG-s and 7 rocket launchers enabled the VC to destroy 9 APC's. It is significant to note that only one of the reacting APC's was hit and destroyed while eight (8) APC's were destroyed in their static defensive positions.

b. Scout dogs (2) were in the perimeter , but did not contribute to the battle. Normally the dogs are used with the night ambush patrols, but due to their employment all day on 24 Feb, they were rested this particular evening.

c. One (1) anti-intrusion device was employed to the northwest towards the closest wood line to the perimeter (approximately 250 meters). No sighting were reported during the night and the anti-intrusion device operator was KIA in the action and his device rendered inoperable.

15. (C) Commander Analysis:

The defense of FS/PB JAGER was the first instance of a Viet Cong force attacking a large size mechanize unit at a field location in the Mekong Delta. The results of this battle pointedly illustrate the great equalizer that the RPG rocket launcher is when an attack is made from close quarters. In a defensive situation, the APC's must be emplaced in hull defilade. However, only during a few months (late February, March and possibly April) will this be possible due to the low water table. In addition, the battle once again indicates the vital necessity for early detection of an attacking force. The perpendicular dikes, when used properly, offer numerous entrances into a FS/PB complex. The longer a unit remains in a defensive position, the greater attention should be made to reducing these avenues that afford concealment to the attacking force. (Note: many of the VC KIA, identified as the 263 Main Force Bn and the 313 Sapper Engineer Co, had straw attached to their backs which provided excellent concealment.)

16. (C) Recommendations:

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That a bulldozer be attached to a mechanized battalion for the purpose of assisting to prepare defensive positions for the APC's (hull defilade).

ROCCO NEGRIS
MAJ INF
Commanding