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1st Squadron  
1st Squadron  
Armored Cavalry  
1st Squadron  
Miscellaneous

**ANNUAL HISTORICAL SUMMARY**  
**(RCS GSHIS-6 (R-2))**  
**1st Squadron, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment**  
**1 January 1966 - 31 December 1966**

23 March 1967

The first day of January 1966, found the "First of the Blackhorse" in garrison at Fort George G. Meade, Maryland. Commanded by LTC Kenneth W. Koch, the Squadron had completed its annual AGI and was busily preparing for the AGI and expected influx of troops.

In the last quarter of calendar year 1965, the First had lost many personnel to units having higher priorities in the Vietnamese effort. However, the New Year brought with it a new atmosphere. A large number of lieutenants made their appearance, and their Platoons were on the way. When the old troopers returned from the Christmas holidays it was down to "brass tacks". Intensified training began. Committees were formed to train the new troopers during their AIT; committees to teach weapons, tactics, maintenance and other essential combat skills.

From 18-26 January, a break was taken while the Squadron underwent its annual AGI inspection, conducted by Headquarters, 1st U. S. Army. At this time the Squadron was still critically short of personnel, and most of its vehicles had been in administrative storage for months. Despite this the AGI team was hard pressed to find deficiencies and the Squadron received an overall rating of excellent.

Braced by their success with the inspections, the "First of the Blackhorse" continued its preparation for AIT and cadre training until 21 February. The week of 21-26 February found every trooper in the Squadron actively engaged in AIT.

March 4, 1966, was a memorable day for the Squadron. This was the day on which the Blackhorse Regiment received its long-awaited official alert for Vietnam. AIT training continued, but now at a fever pitch. On into the month of March the troopers trained in every aspect of combat, with primary emphasis on what was to be needed in Vietnam.

Meanwhile other activities were being planned. Preparations for extensive field training at Camp Pickett, Virginia began. The Squadron was reorganized under TOE 17-55 (M) with an authorized strength of forty-six Officers, six Warrant Officers and 1052 enlisted men. Major changes included the deletion of the tank from the Armored Cavalry Platoon, the addition of the ACAV, Armored Cavalry Assault Vehicle, nine per Cavalry Platoon, and replacement of the 105mm Howitzer by the 155mm howitzer. The new howitzer was not received until January 1967. The end result gave the Squadron 101 ACAV's, 17 M-48A3 tanks, 6 M-109 howitzers, 2 H-23 helicopters, and two HU-1B gun ships.

The ACAV, a modified M-113 is the key weapon. It is a versatile vehicle which has proven highly effective in Vietnam and is equipped with a "hard-kit" consisting of two M-60 machine guns with armored gun shields, one on either side of the vehicle, and a .50 caliber machine gun with cupola. All around coverage by fire is complete with the five man crew: track commander, driver, 2 machine gunners, grenadier/observer.

As February and March passed so also passed all of the ATT which could be done at Fort Meade. At first light on a bitter cold day, 28 March, the "First of the Blackhorse" moved out from their home base bound for Camp Pickett, near Blackstone, Virginia. Tanks, howitzers and other track equipment had been shipped days before by trucks and rail. The move was smoothly completed and ATT continued at Pickett in the form of tank gunnery, howitzer and mortar crewman training. The Squadron followed an exhaustive schedule having the added responsibility for qualifying all tank, howitzers and mortar crews in Regiment. The last main gun tank round went down range on 21 April. And as usual, the "First of the Blackhorse" was first. In the tank gunnery competition the Squadron had the highest over all score, high tank company and high tank platoon.

The 5th of May is traditionally the Blackhorse Organization Day. This was a particularly noteworthy day for the "First of the Blackhorse". The man who was to lead the Squadron into combat assumed Command. At a ceremony on the Camp Pickett parade field, command of the First passed from LTC Koch to LTC Martin D. Howell, O59181, who had been serving as the Blackhorse Regimental Executive Officer since 1 March.

Under its new commander, the Squadron began an intensive period of Field Training Exercises. Emphasis was placed upon the development of tactics suitable for Vietnam. Training began at squad level and proceeded through platoon and troop training and tests. At a steady grind the Squadron trained night and day developing new Cavalry doctrine as it went. Every man realized the importance of the training. As the Cavalry Troops and Tank Company trained, the men of the Howitzer Battery fired their 105mm Self Propelled Howitzers, and trained continuously in night occupations, road marches, hip shoots, direct fire, counter-insurgency and other phases. Their training culminated in a Battery ATT which earned a rating of excellent, and won the praise of all the umpires. The FTX's culminated in the Squadron's ATT which took place from 24 to 27 June. On this test, the Squadron received a rating of "combat ready" and an adjectival ratings of superior or excellent in every single phase, again tops in the Regiment.

Upon completion of these tests, the Squadron packed its equipment and convoyed back to Fort Meade, closing on the afternoon of 28 June. From the time the Squadron closed at Fort Meade until the movement to Vietnam began, the Officers and Troopers engaged in intensive tactical training with the new Armored Cavalry Assault Vehicle, the M-16 rifle, M-60 machine gun and in the use of such items as the starlight device and sniper scope. In addition to exhaustive training, all records were stored, all individuals processed for POR qualification, and vehicles, weapons and equipment packed and loaded for movement overseas.

Then came the long awaited leaves, the last minute packing, and farewells. On 6 August the advance Party began its move by air to Vietnam. The main body moved by air to Oakland, California, 17-19 August to board the USNS Daniel I. Sultan. At thirty minutes past midnight, 20 August 1966, the General Sultan steamed out.

The seventeen day voyage was a busy one. Training was conducted six days a week and included first aid, platoon and troop tactics, lessons learned by other units, language training, civil affairs and weapons. In their spare time troopers enjoyed movies, games and reading. Physical training was stressed with two thirty minute sessions of calisthenics daily. Another aspect was the nightly seminar for Officers and senior NCO's conducted by Colonel Howell on "Men Against Fire", "Lucky Forward", "Combat Lessons" and "After action Reports of the 25th Division".

The "First of the Blackhorse" led the Regiment ashore at Vung Tau, Republic of South Vietnam on the morning of 7 September 1966. The Regimental Colors which had been secured by the First since embarkation were proudly unfurled and presented to Colonel William W. Cobb, the Regimental Commander. Colonel Cobb bid the First farewell at San Francisco and met them at Vung Tau.

The unit moved into the staging area at Long Binh, Bien Hoa Province, by air and closed at 2100 hours the same day. The preparations made by the Advance Party allowed the men to move immediately into tents in the Troop areas and utilize latrine and shower facilities. The following day, 8 September, the Squadron assumed security of the staging area as the remainder of the Blackhorse Regiment closed.

During 8 September to 27 September, the Squadron received its equipment and vehicles and prepared for counter-insurgency operations. During this period, extensive combat patrolling was done and all weapons test fired.

In order to further acclimate key individuals to mounted operations, over 100 Officers and Non-Commissioned Officers were sent to the 1st Squadron of the 4th Cavalry, 1st Infantry Division, located at Lai Khe, and the 3rd Squadron, 4th Cavalry, 25th Infantry Division, located at Cu Chi, to accompany these units on combat operations. The experience gained on these visits by these Officers and men proved to be quite valuable in combat. It was during these operations that the Regiment received its first Purple Heart, awarded to Sgt. 1st of C Troop.

On the 25th of September, the Squadron conducted the Regiment's first mission. The Regiment was to escort an Engineer Company from Long Binh to Bien Hoa. At 0700 hours the convoy, led by Colonel Howell and Lt. Carpenter, of B Troop, proudly crossed the line of departure. The First of the Blackhorse had thrown down its gauntlet. On 27, 28 and 29 September, platoons from A, B, and C Troops provided escort for 87 vehicles of types ranging from cranes to trucks of all kinds. The operations were conducted successfully without loss of personnel or equipment and clearly demonstrated the versatility of the modified TOE under which the 11th Cavalry is organized. The nine ACAV's in each platoon were able to secure the convoys despite their great length and variety of vehicles. The terrain and vegetation along the route offered numerous opportunities for ambush and sniping, but the Viet Cong failed to accept the challenge.

From 1 October to 4 October, the entire Dong Nai Sensitive Area was secured by the elements of all units of the Squadron. The areas and installations secured by the "First of the Blackhorse" included the Headquarters of II Field Forces, and the vital Bien Hoa Air Base. This operation demonstrated that security operations covering large and important areas could be successfully carried out by the Armored Cavalry Squadron. From 5 October until 9 October, the Squadron continued to prepare for its initial major mission of clearing and securing the area in which the Regimental Base was to be constructed. Aerial reconnaissance missions of the Base Camp area were completed and tactical training was conducted in preparation for the move.

On 10 October, the Squadron was placed under the operational control of the 173rd Airborne Brigade, to participate in Operation "Robin". This mission was to secure a 20 kilometer portion of Route 15 for convoys bringing some 4000 troops of the 3rd Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, as they moved from their debarkation point at Vung Tau, to their Base Camp at Bear Cat, about 15 kilometers south of Bien Hoa.

During this operation the "First of the Blackhorse" discovered and destroyed over 75 tunnels dug by the Viet Cong in areas adjacent to Highway 15. While executing this mission, A Troop and C Troop both became the proud captors of Viet Cong crossbows, the first weapons captured by the Regiment in Vietnam. Search and clear operations were conducted simultaneously with the route security missions. During Operation "Robin", the vigilance and aggressive patrolling conducted by the "First of the Blackhorse" resulted in all personnel and equipment of the 3rd Brigade arriving at their destination safely and without incident, and won the praise of BG Paul F. Smith, CG, 173rd Airborne Brigade, expressed in the form of a plaque with these words engraved "To 1st Squadron, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment from 173rd Airborne Brigade (Sep) in appreciation of your dedicated support during Operation Robin, Republic of South Vietnam, 10-17 October 1966".

The Squadron returned to the staging area on 17 October, and at the same time received the eagerly awaited news to prepare for execution of Operation "Atlanta", the mission to clear and secure the Regimental Base Camp area near Long Giao, on Route 2 south of Xuan Loc. Final preparations were made and the men loaded their vehicles for what became known as the "Big Move".

A night move was chosen. This would take the VC by surprise, would show other allied units that Armor was ready to dispute the myth of VC night supremacy, and would enable suspected VC hamlets to be surrounded in darkness. The Squadron began its move at 0230 hours on 20 October. This was the first major night move by a large armored unit in the war against the Viet Cong; the march of over 50 kilometers was executed with such speed and efficiency that the villages to be cleared in the area near the new Base Camp were surrounded by daybreak. The villages were cleared by 1000 hours with six Viet Cong suspects captured, numerous tunnels destroyed and two road blocks destroyed. The Squadron then secured the Base Camp area and prepared for aggressive patrolling and clearing operations in the area.

Less than 24 hours after arrival at the Base Camp, the "First of the Blackhorse" was again on the move. Troop B moved 15 kilometers south of the Base Camp and in a search and clear mission, captured the Regiment's first Viet Cong with weapons, Viet Cong Military Orders and Viet Cong propaganda leaflets. He proved of great intelligence value, and the Squadron received the personal thanks of III Force V Commander, LTG Johnathan O. Seaman.

Until 3 November, the Squadron continued Operation "Atlanta" with cordon and search operations, and ambush patrols throughout daylight and darkness to the maximum extent commensurate with our mission. Enemy contact during this period was sporadic, mainly snipers.

The "First of the Blackhorse" commenced Operation "Albuquerque" at 0315 hours, 4 November, when the Squadron cordoned and searched AP SUOI GAI and 3 adjoining suspected VC hamlets. Four confirmed VC were captured. It was continued with the attachment of Battery C, 2nd Battalion, 35th Artillery and two companies from the 10th ARVN Division. Subsequent to the cordoning of the villages, the First with its attachments moved to establish combat bases north and south of Gai Ray. The Squadron conducted search and clear operations southeast of Gai Ray, and between Gai Ray and Vo Dat for the next three days, while the 1st Squadron Howitzer Battery and C/2/35th Artillery fired on suspected VC targets throughout the area. During this period some sniper fire was received, however, no major contact was made.

At 1100 hours, the Squadron received orders for a new mission. It was to go to the assistance of the "Big Red One" which was heavily engaged in Operation "Attleboro". The move from Gai Ray to Lai Tho, a distance of more than one hundred miles, with over 140 vehicles, was completed within seven hours without the loss of a single vehicle. This move convinced doubters of the value of Armor in Vietnam. The Squadron's mission was to perform area and route security, and provide the Ready Reaction Force for the 1st Infantry Division during Operation "Attleboro". During this operation, units of the Squadron reported sporadic VC activity which included several mortar attacks and sniping incidents. On 19 November, the "First of the Blackhorse" went to OPCON of the 173rd Airborne again. The mission, extrication of the Brigade from Minh Thanh rubber plantation. The extrication route led through heavily infested VC country which had been the scene of the 6 June and 9 July ambushes. At 1715 hours on 19 November, while moving to Minh Thanh, 1st platoon of Troop A received automatic weapons fire from a VC. The platoon returned fire, killed the VC and captured his weapon. The escort mission was accomplished on the 20th without loss of life. A command detonated mine however, was detonated which resulted in six US WIA and damage to an ACAV. The detonator was killed.

During "Attleboro" the Squadron initiated "Thunder Runs" during the hours of darkness which accounted for the significant absence of mining along Route 13. A "Thunder Run" is night movement of a combined tank-ACAV force which fires H & I with 90mm canister, 7.62 machineguns and M79 HE into suspected enemy areas on both sides of a major route. The effectiveness has since been proven many times.

The Squadron was released from Operation "Attleboro" on 20 November, and given the mission of transporting and escorting elements of the 173rd Airborne Brigade from Minh Tranh to Phuoc Khanh. After the delivery of the 173rd Airborne Brigade, Troop A and Howitzer Battery continued on to the Base Camp and were placed under Operational Control of the 2nd Squadron as reinforcement for Base Camp security. Squadron (-) closed to the old staging area at Long Binh and were bedding down for the night when word came of a new requirement--escort of a 50 vehicle convoy from the staging area to the Base Camp. Lt. Keltner's first platoon of Charlie Troop was given the assignment.

At 0930 hours, the column moved out. At 1025 hours, Lieutenant Keltner's column began receiving intense small arms and automatic weapons fire at coordinates YT 285099. Lt Keltner moved into action--delivering fire on the enemy, reorganizing the convoy, and arranging care and evacuation of the wounded. LTC Howell immediately ordered Troop C, Troop B and Company D to move respectively. Troop A and Howitzer Battery, still under operational control of 2nd Squadron, were alerted and moved to a supporting position south of Cnh Que. The terrain around the ambush zone was covered with dense banana groves and jungle to the south of the highway and high elephant grass to the north. The ambush column was now being hit by heavy automatic weapons recoilless rifle, RPG-2 rocket and mortar fire. Enemy positions were along both sides of the road, some as close as three meters. In less than thirty minutes the reaction force covered the thirty kilometer distance and deployed in mounted sweeps to both the north and south. Artillery and airstrikes were simultaneously called in. Gunships from the Regimental Aviation section were also airborne. The artillery and airstrikes began sealing the area while the troops conducted their sweeps. Immediate reaction and heavy fire power employed by the escort vehicles plus the quick reaction of the rest of the Squadron minimized US casualties and resulted in the VC breaking contact and fleeing to the south. A 57mm recoilless rifle, 3 AKA machine-guns, a mortar, an M-1, a carbine, 57mm ammunition, mortar ammunition, grenades and hundreds of rounds of small arms ammunition were captured. VC losses were 38 KIA, verified by body count, and an estimated 100 wounded. The Squadron had four KIA and seventeen WIA.

The Squadron camped on the battlefield and conducted extensive search of the area before returning to the Base Camp to resume Operation "Atlanta".

Thanksgiving Day found the Squadron in Base Camp enjoying delicious turkey dinners. The calm was interrupted when a platoon from Troop A was sent to Gai Ray on a show of force. That night the Base Camp was mortared. It was an indication of things to come.

The last month of 1966, opened with a bang. The Squadron was combat tested and proved it on the second day of the month. Troop B, reinforced, was securing an engineer quarry site at Gai Ray on Highway 1. At approximately 1600 hours a convoy of 2 M48A3 tanks, 2 ACAV's and 2 supply trucks departed from Base Camp on a routine resupply run to Gai Ray. The convoy was commanded by 1st Lt Wilbert Radosevich, Platoon Leader of Company D. Just East of AP Suoi Cat at coordinates YT 593064, the convoy was ambushed by a reinforced battalion of Viet Cong, approximately 600-800 personnel. LTC Howell alerted the reaction forces as soon as Lieutenant Radosevich reported that his column was being hit by a large force. Troop B

reaction forces at Gai Ray sped to the scene and arrived within ten minutes. The Squadron reaction force, led by Company D, moved within seven minutes and arrived at the battle area in less than twenty-five minutes, having covered thirty kilometers of rough road. The Squadron's elements swept through the area and aggressively pursued the enemy through the dense jungle on both sides of the road. Artillery and air-strikes were called in to seal off the escape routes. By dark, the enemy had broken contact. It was a significant victory for the "First of the Blackhorse" and an awesome defeat for the VC. Viet Cong losses were 99 KIA, verified by body count, 3 captured, and an estimated 100-150 additional killed or wounded. Weapons of all descriptions were gathered from the battlefield to include a 75mm recoilless rifle, the first to be captured by US Forces in Vietnam. The Squadron had no KIA's and only 17 wounded, most of whom returned to duty within a few days.

Next came one of the most successful of the First's operations-DAN TAM 81. This operation was to secure the rice harvest in the Vo Dat-Vo Xu area. The Squadron was given additional missions to secure the route from Suoi Cat to Thanh Linh, secure engineer work parties, and conduct search and destroy operations north of the La Nga River. Additionally, the Squadron assumed the mission of repairing the air-strips at Vo Dat and Thanh Linh. To accomplish these missions the 3rd Battalion, 18 ARVN Division was attached, marking another first for the Regiment, and enlarging the command to almost 2000. The First decided to go north of the La Nga River, heretofore a VC sanctuary. Attached engineers began work to reinforce the bridge east of Vo Xu. On the 16th, the ACAV's rumbled across along with the 3/43 Regiment from the 10th ARVN Division. Rice, rice, and more rice was found-a total of 100 tons, 80 of which were evacuated to District Headquarters at Vo Dat by Chinook and ACAV. Three VC were also killed.

On the 24th, the "First of the Blackhorse" pulled into a perimeter for the Christmas truce. All the troops enjoyed Christmas dinner as well as an abundance of cold beverages. Groups of local children were entertained. Christmas presents, received from various civic organizations in CONUS, were distributed and the spirit of the holiday season was not darkened by the signs of war.

On 26 December, at first light, the Squadron crossed the La Nga river again. Both mounted and dismounted patrols swept the area and discovered another 30 tons of rice which was evacuated to Vo Dat, and 3 more VC bit the dust.

"The true value of the operation cannot be measured in military objectives alone. Equally important as the Viet Cong weapons captured, the Base Camps destroyed, and the seven Viet Cong killed, were the far reaching benefits of the operation on the civilian populace... the performance of the command was even more remarkable in light of last years operation in the same area...with fewer troops than utilized to secure the rice harvest last year, the 1st Squadron secured more military objectives, constructed bridges, opened the roads of the area



for civilian traffic, reopened and reconstructed airfields and in general over-shadowed previous Free World Military Forces efforts in that region". 1

On 30 December, the "First of the Blackhorse" returned to the Base Camp, proud of its achievements and confident of its future.

*Martin D. Howell*  
MARTIN D. HOWELL  
LTC           Armor  
Commanding

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Colonel William W. Cobb, Letter, Headquarters 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, dated, 28 January 1967.

# RESULTS OF SQUADRON ATT

ATT 17-105 Modified

240700 June 65-271000 June 1966

## Adjectival Ratings:

### PHASE I Movement to and Occupation of Combat Base

1st Squadron	Excellent
Headquarters & Headquarters Troop	Excellent
Troop A	Excellent
Troop B	Excellent
Troop C	Excellent
Company D	Excellent
Howitzer Battery	Superior

### PHASE II Harassment

1st Squadron	Excellent
Headquarters & Headquarters Troop	Excellent
Troop A	Excellent
Troop B	Excellent
Troop C	Excellent
Company D	Excellent
Howitzer Battery	Excellent

### PHASE III Police Operations

1st Squadron	Excellent
Headquarters & Headquarters Troop	Excellent
Troop A	Excellent
Troop B	Excellent
Troop C	Excellent
Company D	Excellent
Howitzer Battery	Excellent

### PHASE IV Offensive Operations

1st Squadron	Excellent
Headquarters & Headquarters Troop	Excellent
Troop A	Excellent
Troop B	Excellent
Troop C	Excellent
Company D	Excellent
Howitzer Battery	Excellent

### OVERALL RATING

1st Squadron	Excellent
Headquarters & Headquarters Troop	Excellent
Troop A	Excellent
Troop B	Excellent
Troop C	Excellent
Company D	Excellent
Howitzer Battery	Excellent

STRENGTH

	<u>ASG</u>		<u>AUTH</u>	
1 Jan 66	OFF	31	OFF	46
	WO	2	WO	6
	EM	383	EM	950
1 Apr 66	OFF	31	OFF	46
	WO	2	WO	6
	EM	602	EM	1052
1 Jul 66	OFF	48	OFF	46
	WO	4	WO	6
	EM	1128	EM	1052
1 Oct 66	OFF	50	OFF	46
	WO	4	WO	6
	EM	1057	EM	1052
31 Dec 66	OFF	48	OFF	46
	WO	4	WO	6
	EM	1071	EM	1052

1. On 1 Jan 66 the 1st Squadron was organized under TO&E 17-55E with authorized strength of:

46 Officers  
6 Warrant Officers  
950 Enlisted Men

2. Effective 22 March 1966 the 1st Squadron was reorganized under TO&E 17-55(M) per GO 12, Hq Ft. Meade, with authorized strength:

46 Officers  
6 Warrant Officers  
1052 Enlisted Men