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NARRATIVE OF THE BATTLE OF SROK DONG
30 JUNE 1966

INTRODUCTION (U)

The 271st Viet Cong Main Force Regiment was defeated on 30 June 1966, near the village of SROK DONG in one of the classic engagements of the Vietnam conflict. In continuing their efforts to repel the 1st Infantry Division from the EL PASO II area of operations, the VC attempted to ambush Troops B and C, 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry and Company C, 2d Battalion, 18th Infantry. As a consequence, the 271st Regiment suffered heavy losses and was soundly defeated.

BACKGROUND (U)

Operation EL PASO II commenced on 2 June 1966 when intelligence indicated that three Viet Cong and one North Vietnamese regiments were poised to resume their "Monsoon Campaign" by attacking GVN and U.S. Special Forces compounds in MINH THANH, HON QUAN, LOC NINH, and SONG BE. Because of this threat, Commanding General, II Field Force, Vietnam, directed one infantry and one artillery battalion be deployed to LOC NINH to strengthen the defenses in this area. Subsequently, additional elements were deployed by CG 1st Div until by mid-June the majority of the division was operating throughout BINH LONG and PHUCC LONG Provinces. 1st Infantry Division troop dispositions as of 300600 June are indicated on attached map 1. Two significant engagements had been fought with the VC prior to 30 June. On 8 June, Troop A (+), 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry had spoiled an ambush on Route 13, set by the 272d VC Main Force Regiment while passing through TAU O, an area between CHON THANH and HON QUAN. When the 4-hour engagement ended, the VC had lost 105 KIA (BC) with an additional 250 probably killed. The second significant engagement involved elements of the 2d Battalion, 28th Infantry and CIMG forces in the Battle of LOC NINH Plantation on 11 June 1966. One battalion of the 273d Main Force Regiment was emplaced in trenches and heavily fortified bunkers but after massive artillery and mortar fire and air strikes, the positions were overrun. VC losses were 98 KIA (BC) and 150 KIA (Probable).

For about two weeks the 2d Battalion, 18th Infantry with the 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry (-) had the mission of securing the division base at QUAN LOI and the HON QUAN airfield. From 8 June, the cavalry squadron had been performing reconnaissance to the east, south, southwest, and to the north limited by the destroyed bridge on Route 13 at XT 722973. In coordination with ARVN forces the banks of the stream were prepared to permit emplacement of an armored vehicle launched bridge (AVLB) just to the left of the one that had been damaged. An operation was planned in conjunction with the emplacement of the AVLB, to commence on 30 June. The squadron plan was submitted to Lt Col Herbert McChrystal, Commanding Officer, 2d Battalion, 18th Infantry, and was approved for operations in the area indicated on maps 2 and 3. The mission assigned to Lt Col Leonard Lewane, Commanding Officer, 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry, was actually threefold. First the squadron (-) was to cross Check Point GOLDEN GATE (AVLB) and proceed north along Route 13 conducting a reconnaissance in force. Troop C was to operate in area of operation BASEBALL while B Troop would initially operate in FOOTBALL and later in TENNIS. Second, B Troop, in conjunction with operations in TENNIS, would escort an engineer scoop loader from LOC NINH, back to Check Point GOLDEN GATE. Third, the operation was to deceive the enemy as to the actual area in which the division was planning to operate in the near future. Both troops were to close back into HON QUAN by 1930 on 30 June.

~~DOWNGRADED AT 3 YEAR INTERVALS
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PER AUTHORITY	DOD 5200. I-R
DATE	<i>3 Nov 75</i> <i>Chris Eichman</i>

Troop B would have one platoon of C Company, 2d Battalion, 18th Infantry attached, while the remainder of C Company would move with C Troop. The 2d Battalion, 18th Infantry maintained B Company on alert as the rapid reaction force. With final planning completed, the operation would begin on 30 June.

The vegetation in the area of the contact is wooded on both sides of the road. The only open areas are rice paddies, some stream banks, and small lakes. Even here, there is adequate concealment due to the chest-high grass. There are heavily forested areas as indicated on map 3 and the sketch maps, with the trees 150 - 200 feet high. Although movement in the grass is difficult to observe from the ground, it can be observed from the air except where the terrain is heavily forested. The chest-high grass comes up to the shoulders of the road. The weather at the time of contact was clear and hot.

THE BATTLE OF SROK DONG (U)

On 30 June, Troop B, 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry, with attached 1st Platoon, C Company, 2d Battalion, 18th Infantry and AVLB section departed the squadron perimeter at HON QUAN enroute to Check Point GOLDEN GATE. The column was located at the bridge site by 0859 hours. Troop C was to depart HON QUAN at 0730 with C Company (-). However, this column was delayed until Troop C could reorganize after the search operation conducted until 2400 hours the previous night. At 0910, the column crossed GOLDEN GATE with B Troop leading and proceeded north on Route 13 to the operational areas specified in the order. Upon arrival at Check Point 1, the 3d Platoon with the platoon of infantry turned east and conducted a reconnaissance to the ford at Check Point 2. Due to the depth of the ford, the platoon retraced the route to Check Point 1, turned north on Route 13, passed through the 1st Platoon, and continued north. Order of march was now 3d Platoon with attached infantry, Troop Command Group, 2d Platoon, and 1st Platoon.

Troop C turned west at Check Point 1 and proceeded to the first stream. Three mortar carriers, ten infantry-men, and the 3d Platoon remained at Check Point 1 and established a perimeter. The mortars were laid west to support the troop. As C Troop moved west, they flanked the road on both sides. After crossing the stream, the infantry dismounted and deployed.

At about 0938 hours when the lead personnel carrier of B Troop, moving north on Route 13 toward LOC NINH, reached a point about midway across the rice paddy (sketch map 1), it began receiving mortar, small arms and recoilless rifle fire and appeared to be the only one engaged. 1st Lieutenant James P. Flores, B Troop Commander, could see the mortar rounds bursting from his position in the column about 800 meters to the rear of the lead vehicle. He immediately called Col Lewane, who was over the area in an OH-13 helicopter. The 3d Platoon then reported receiving heavy fire from the north and north-west. A preplanned airstrike was currently in progress vicinity XT 7499, which Col Lewane diverted to XU 721018 at Lt Flores' request. Lt Flores then called the 2d Platoon forward and deployed them around the 3d Platoon. The 2d Platoon brought their two tanks and one from the 1st Platoon forward. By this time all but one tank and a personnel carrier of the 3d Platoon had returned to Check Point 1 with wounded and to replenish ammunition. All platoons were now in contact on both sides of the road, with the heaviest volume of fire coming from the west.

The Viet Cong had set up the ambush in the shape of an "L", with a heavy security element crossing the road along the trail north of the paddy. The logs piled at random to the east of Check Point 3 afforded good protection and some of the recoilless rifles were probably located here. Mortars were reported by a forward air controller in the woods to the north of the village. The ambush extended for about 2000 meters, but with the exception of a security element to the northeast of Check Point 1, the eastern side of the road was lightly defended. The VC appeared to be lined up all along the west side of the road with the heavy weapons about 150 meters from the road in the heaviest vegetation. The VC were wearing a variety of khaki, black, and green uniforms. One strong point had been established by the VC in vicinity XU 722007. The recoilless rifles caused the most trouble, and were also the most difficult to locate. During the first 30 minutes of the contact, the enemy concentrated on knocking out the tanks. All four B Troop tanks were disabled from hits on the tank commander's cupola and subsequent wounding of the crew.

The 1st Platoon of B Troop was carrying the wounded to GOLDEN GATE with an intermediate aid station set up at Check Point 1. They also helped with the establishment of a strong point at Check Point 1. Because the incoming fire at Check Point 1 was so intense, Dust Off aircraft could not land so the squadron S-3 set-up the Dust Off LZ at GOLDEN GATE and wounded were collected at Check Point 1 and then moved south.

Troop B concentrated on laying down a heavy base of fire to the west. Airstrikes which had been continuous from the initial strike, were being placed to the north and west. Artillery was attacking targets on the east of Route 13 and armed UH-1B's and CH-47's were making firing passes north and south on the areas immediately adjacent to the road. When the 1st Platoon reported receiving fire at Check Point 1, it appeared to Lt Flores that the VC were attempting to cut him off from Check Point 1. An airstrike was immediately called in and the fire slackened at this location. The remaining elements at the head of the column were still receiving heavy fire from all types of weapons and Lt Flores called requesting C Troop come up and help.

When the first contact was reported, Captain Stephen Slattery, C Troop Commander, ordered the infantry to mount up and prepare to move back to Check Point 1, establish a strong point, and be prepared to assist B Troop. The 3d Platoon had been receiving some light fire at Check Point 1, but when the other platoons arrived at this location, the fire became more intense. Several of the infantry riding on the personnel carriers were hit as mortar rounds started falling into the area. Capt Slattery ordered the platoons to deploy and push out the perimeter, primarily to the north. The 3d Platoon was operating northwest of the crossroads, 1st Platoon east, and 2d Platoon west and southwest. The mortars had been re-laid to fire to the north. Check Point 1 was becoming very jammed with C Troop maneuvering and vehicles returning with B Troop wounded. Check Point 1 continued to receive heavy small arms fire with most of it coming from west of the road. Mortar and recoilless fire was being answered with a heavy volume of 50 caliber fire from the personnel carriers at the road junction. Col Lewane called and ordered C Troop to push north and relieve the pressure on B Troop. The 3d Platoon was finally able to start moving north with the tank from 2d Platoon. About 200 meters from Check Point 1, the tank was hit in the turret and the commander, Sergeant Allison, and the loader were seriously wounded. They were pulled from the tank and evacuated. The tank continued north. The

C Troop column consisted of the 2d Platoon, 1st Platoon, and Troop Command Group (sketch map 2). The 3d Platoon, C Company (-), and mortars remained at the crossroads. Intense fire was received all the way to B Troop's position, but a heavy base of fire was maintained by the personnel carriers and the tank. The brush was so thick and close on both sides of the road, grenades were just tossed over the sides of the vehicles. About 600 meters after the first hit, the tank was hit again, but the driver kept going even though the gunner, Sergeant Riddle was wounded and evacuated. When the Troop C column arrived at the tail of the B Troop position, Lt Flores said to go farther north and fire to the west. The 1st and 2d Platoons moved up and deployed as best as they could since they were confined to the area immediately left and right of the road. Fire was directed east and west with the heaviest volume to the west. Col Lewane ordered C Troop to hold at this point until B Troop could be extracted and move south. The C Troop tank went almost to the O1 grid line before it turned around and came back. Three men from the 2d Platoon joined Sergeant Wilson in the tank and although power to the turret was gone, they succeeded in getting the gun bearing to the north and northwest. Sixty rounds were fired before the ammunition was exhausted. The tank was then moved along side a disabled B Troop tank and the ammunition transferred. VC could be seen jumping around but didn't appear to be withdrawing. Artillery was firing north and east and airstrikes were being concentrated on the west, but appeared to be too far west. Captain Slattery asked Col Lewane to move them in closer and the next strike came in south to north with CBU which landed very close to the road.

With the arrival of C Troop, Lt Flores pulled all the remaining elements of B Troop back to Check Point 1, to regroup, rearm, and establish a block along the road west from Check Point 1. When the first lifts of A Company, 2d Battalion, 18th Infantry were approaching the LZ, Lt Flores pulled back. Troop B remained at Check Point 1 for about 40 minutes to rearm and get the wounded and dead back to GOLDEN GATE. The next 30 minutes were taken to move the 1st and 2d Platoons down the road to block. The 3d Platoon handled the evacuation of wounded (sketch map 3).

Lieutenant Charles D Cole with the 3d Platoon of C Troop had been handling casualties between the forward elements and GOLDEN GATE. He loaded C Company on the personnel carriers and moved to the head of the column. After the infantry were dropped, the 3d Platoon deployed west of the road while the 2d Platoon moved off to the east in an attempt to push the VC out onto the LZ (sketch map 4). Lt Cole's platoon hit a VC strong point. He was hit in the chest and several others were wounded before they could pull back. The mechanized flame thrower with Lieutenant John K Lyon's 1st Platoon assisted in the extraction of 3d Platoon. As the infantry began to land on LZ 2 and C Company began to deploy, the fire slackened. Fire from the personnel carriers was directed more to the west. The VC started withdrawing and many were killed as they jumped to run through the high grass.

~~After a delay of about 30 minutes~~ caused by enemy fire received from both sides of the road, B Troop was occupying their blocking position. Initially, the head of the column halted just west of the stream until information was received that a reinforced ARVN APC troop would assist. The block was then extended to about the 70 N-S grid line. From the blocking position, VC could be seen withdrawing along the trail that parallels the road and were taken under fire.

Troop C established a perimeter along Route 13 until the infantry started making the sweep. By 1530 contact along the road had practically ceased and the personnel moved into the brush to search for dead and wounded VC and weapons. The 3d Platoon, B Troop returned to the blocking position with the Aero Rifle Platoon of D Troop. By 1700 movement had ceased and the two troops remained in position the remainder of the day.

REACTION (U)

For a week prior to 30 June 1966, B Company, 2d Battalion, 18th Infantry had been maintained on a 30 minute alert as a rapid reaction force and was in this posture at the time B Troop made contact. When it became obvious that both troops and the attached rifle company were heavily engaged, B Company was alerted for probable deployment. Two questions had to be answered first; how they would be employed and by what means of transportation. All helicopters were fully committed on other missions. Twelve 3/4 ton trucks were collected from the various units in the vicinity of the battalion command post at QUAN LOI, and B Company was prepared to move prior to their arrival. At 1026 hours the helicopters supporting the 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry in the SONG BE area were diverted to QUAN LOI, but by 1040 hours had not arrived. Company B departed by vehicle for the squadron command post at HON QUAN, and at 1105 passed to control of Col Lewane.

Between 1015 and 1020 hours, A Company, 2d Battalion, 18th Infantry was alerted, pulled off the perimeter, and instructed to be on the airfield in the event helicopters became available. Company A was assembled on the airfield by 1100 hours. General DePuy called Col McChrystal to the division command post about 1040 hours to be briefed on what had happened in his battalion. General DePuy made the decision to divert 12 helicopters from SONG BE. All helicopters closed the QUAN LOI airfield at 1130 hours. Col Lewane was informed of the current status of Companies A and B and asked where and how he wished to deploy them. A command and control helicopter arrived for Col McChrystal and he and the battalion S-3 went forward for a reconnaissance.

Col Lewane had selected two landing zones; LZ 1 in the rice paddy on the east of Route 13 (XU 727012) and LZ 2 across the road. He decided on the latter with the direction of attack south. At 1145, Col Lewane was informed that the first lift of A Company was loaded. The company commander was briefed that he would land on LZ 2; he should operate his radio on the squadron frequency; and he was under control of the squadron commander. The LZ was prepared by air strikes and artillery and then was marked with smoke from Col McChrystal's aircraft. A Company closed in two lifts.

Company B proceeded north on Route 13 toward CP GOLDEN GATE. Upon arrival at that location, the company would be moved into the battle area by helicopters or personnel carriers. Major Taylor landed at the bridge and discovered there were a number of wounded requiring evacuation by Dust Off helicopters and the pick-up zone would become too congested with assault helicopters landing there also. An alternate pick-up zone was selected at XT 734967 and the road column of B Company was diverted to this location. Company B then made an airmobile assault into LZ 2 utilizing four lifts of five aircraft. A command group from the 2d Battalion, 18th Infantry had been prepared for lift after B Company had closed the LZ. As one helicopter in the last lift of B Company landed, it apparently struck a dud CBU bomblet. All personnel cleared the damaged ship

before it was consumed by fire. Col McChrystal landed with B Company, and assumed command of Companies A and B. Col Lewane was informed of this and that the battalion (-) was attacking in the direction he had specified.

As the companies started pushing south, B was west of Route 13 and A to their right (sketch map 5). Company A met resistance about 200 meters south of the LZ while B Company was mopping up the remaining elements of the enemy just to the west of Route 13. About 300 meters south of the LZ, B Company uncovered C Troop and C Company (-). At this time, Col McChrystal assumed command of these elements. Company C was ordered to reorganize and search the immediate area, while C Troop was to reorganize, recover disabled tanks and personnel carriers, and support from Route 13 as Company B continued sweeping south and A Company southwest. Company B ceased to meet resistance by the time they had progressed about 800 meters from the LZ. However, A Company met stiff resistance along the creek, vicinity XU 715005 (sketch map 6). The Viet Cong had established a strong combat outpost line east and west of the creek. Company A sustained a few wounded. Since no headway was being made, C Company was committed on the right flank of A Company. The link-up was made by 1615 and the strength of the two companies forced the VC out of their positions. Dust Off was completed and the sweep continued south to the blocking positions held by B Troop and the ARVN forces.

At 1600, Col Berry, 1st Brigade Commander, landed and directed the 2d Battalion, 18th Infantry to assemble at LZ 2 and become the brigade reserve. The units returned to an assembly area just south of the LZ in the order B, A, and C Company, where the battalion remained overnight. The reconnaissance platoon, and mortar platoon of the battalion were flown in at 1700. Three ambush sites were established on the south, southwest, and the west, but no enemy activity was experienced during the night.

During the time the 2d Battalion, 18th Infantry was preparing for deployment, the 1st Brigade Commander was alerted at 1003 to move one infantry battalion and the brigade TAC CP in that order to QUAN LOI. The 1st Battalion, 2d Infantry commenced the move at 1234 hours using C-123 and CV-2 aircraft. The brigade closed the airfield at QUAN LOI at 1530. At 1622, the 1st Battalion, 2d Infantry commenced an airmobile assault into LZ BLUE, (map 2) and by about 1715 had closed into the area and began sweeping eastward.

Shortly after the contact was reported, the BINH LONG Province Chief offered units immediately available to him for support of the 1st Infantry Division. The 3d Troop, 1st Cavalry, ARVN, with 20 APC's reinforced with the 3d Company, 1st Battalion, 9th Regiment, ARVN, were attached to the 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry. At 1100 hours the U.S. Advisor reported to the 1st Infantry Division G-3 for a mission. He was directed to immediately proceed north on Route 13 to link up with U.S. elements at Check Point 1. This was accomplished and the blocking position established at approximately 1300 hours (sketch map 5). The 9th Regiment had one other company immediately available for operations which moved to secure the bridge at Check Point GOLDEN GATE. The Regional Force companies were securing the road between the bridge and HON QUAN. One company of the 9th Regiment was called back from an operation south of QUAN LOI as a possible escort for the move of an artillery battery north on Route 13.

At about 1100 hours, two CIDG companies were sent from LOC NINH and assumed blocking positions north of the battle area.

The 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry was ordered at 1020 hours to move from SONG BE to QUAN LOI. The battalion closed at QUAN LOI at 1620 and A Battery, 2d Battalion, 33d Artillery moved by CH-47 from SONG BE, closing at 2245. This battery was moved to LZ BLUE (map 2) at 1115 hours, 1 July.

At 1420 hours, the 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry was ordered to terminate its operation, return to LAI KHE and prepare for movement on order. At 1430 2d Battalion, 16th Infantry was ordered to move one company from the 2d Brigade Base Camp to PHUOC VINH and the battalion (-) to LAI KHE. The 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry closed into LAI KHE at 1715 and the last of C Company, 2d Battalion, 16th Infantry was on the way to PHUOC VINH in fixed wing aircraft by 1813.

The 2d Battalion, 2d Infantry commenced moving from LAI KHE at 1600 hours utilizing C-123 and CV-2 aircraft. All elements of this battalion had closed into QUAN LOI at 1710.

1 - 2 JULY (U)

On 1 July, follow up action continued against remnants of the 271st VC Regiment. The 1st Battalion, 2d Infantry secured LZ BLUE as Battery A, 2d Battalion, 33d Artillery was lifted by CH-47 to support future operations. Company C remained to secure the LZ while the remainder of the battalion moved to seize the bridge at XT 683998; link up with the 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry (-); and with B Troop proceed to Objective 1 (XU 698027). Troop C joined Company C, 1st Battalion, 2d Infantry at LZ BLUE.

The 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry conducted an airmobile assault into LZ GREEN (XT 616995) at 1000 hours. The battalion moved to secure Objective BASEBALL (XT 623996); left one company in blocking positions; and proceeded to vicinity of XU 721021 to conduct a search of the battle area of the previous day. Light contact was made with small groups of VC.

The 2d Battalion, 18th Infantry continued to search the battle area and uncovered numerous shallow graves and additional VC bodies. At 1600 hours, the battalion conducted an airmobile assault on LZ PINK (XU 592025) and occupied positions for the night as shown on Overlay 1. Company A made contact with the VC and Company C and Recon Platoon were sent to reinforce. Mortar and small arms fire was received until contact was broken at 2030 hours. At 0545 hours 2 July, the overnight positions of A Company, C Company, and Recon Platoon, were taken under fire by VC automatic weapons and mortars. The VC then launched a series of five assaults from all directions, but the attack was countered by fire support from artillery, gun ships, and fighter bombers. A total of 61 sorties were flown by USAF fighter bombers and included close air support by three flights using SKY SPOT (radar bombing) techniques. Company B was moved at 0730 hours to reinforce Companies A and C and contact was broken at 0900 hours. A body count of VC dead revealed that the attacking 3d Battalion, 273d VC Main Force Regiment suffered the loss of 78 killed.

At 0710 hours, the 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry moved from overnight positions to support the 2d Battalion, 18th Infantry. Link-up was made at 0930 hours and both battalions searched the area around the defensive perimeter. The 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry then continued north toward LZ ROSE (XU 5904) but made no contact.

The 1st Battalion, 2d Infantry, minus C Company at the artillery base, assembled on Route 13 and was helilifted into LZ RED (XU 657050), closing at 1320 hours. This LZ and adjacent LZ WHITE (XU 657037) were secured by Troops B and C, 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry and attached ARVN APC troop and rifle company.

The 2d Battalion, 2d Infantry was helilifted into LZ PINK and relieved the 2d Battalion, 18th Infantry which returned to control of 1st Infantry Division at 1530. During the night the 2d Battalion, 2d Infantry came under mortar attack which appeared later to have been a cover for the withdrawal of the VC to the southwest and northwest. A sweep of the area was made with only minor contact.

FIRE SUPPORT (U)

At the time B Troop made contact, a preplanned air strike was in progress vicinity XT 7499. The aircraft had commenced dropping CBU at the time Col Lewane notified the forward air controller (FAC) that the armored column was in contact. The pilot pulled out of his southeast to northwest direction of flight and brought his aircraft down the west side of Route 13, expending the remainder of his CBU, Napalm, and 20mm. A large group of VC were seen running east along the trail north of the rice paddy. The next flight concentrated on the logs at Check Point 3 and the trail. A second FAC arrived about 1030 and started working along the trail. Col Lewane requested the area along Route 13 about 300 meters from the road be hit, however, the troop commanders requested it be moved closer to the road. During the dash of Lt Cole's 3d Platoon forward with the infantry, a napalm strike was placed along side the west of the road assisting his movement. Col Lewane called for a preparation on LZ 2, but delayed the actual landing when he was notified that aircraft were on station with CBU. This strike was placed from the 00 grid line to the LZ. After the LZ preparation, air strikes were directed to the west to cover trails on which VC were withdrawing in groups of from 5 to 15. Napalm strikes were placed ahead of the advancing 2d Battalion, 18th Infantry.

From the initial preplanned strike, close air support was continuous and unlimited. A total of 88 sorties were flown as follows:

A4	-	24
F100	-	40
A1	-	10 (VNAF)
F5	-	6
F4	-	8

Ordnance expended included:

High Explosive	-	42.3 tons
Napalm	-	48 tons
CBU	-	11.5 tons
Rockets	-	160

There was a minimum of one FAC on station at all times. These FACs were in constant communication with either the squadron commander, S-3, or troop commanders.

Artillery direct support was provided by Battery B (155mm) and Battery D (8"), 8th Battalion, 6th Artillery located at HON QUAN (XT 762891). Battery B fired 548 rounds and Battery D fired 277 from the time contact was made until about 1900 hours.

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Defensive concentrations had been plotted along the route which facilitated ground observers with the column to call for fire. However, most of the missions were adjusted by air observers. Within minutes after contact began, an air observer was over the battle area. Fire was most intense from the northeast and northwest and artillery was fired on the trail north of the rice paddy. These fires were shifted to the wooded area north of SROK DONG. Col Lewane then directed that artillery would fire to the east of Route 13. This was continued until such time as he directed that artillery be placed as a block along the streamline to the west. Artillery was also used in the preparation of LZ 2 and shifted prior to the landing to the woods on the north. Artillery continued to block along the streamline to the west after the infantry deployed. Groups of VC were seen to walk into the fire, lying down or getting in holes between volleys. By 1700, resistance had ended, but air and artillery continued to interdict likely assembly areas and routes of withdrawal. Interdiction continued throughout the night.

In addition to air and artillery, helicopter gunships supported the engaged units. At 0945 hours an armed CH-47, GO-GO 154, received an ambush reaction mission in support of the armored column. Contact was made with Col Lewane at 1000 hours. The pilot was briefed on the situation and made an immediate attack on the enemy forces 100 meters west of Route 13. The first attack was made at 1008 hours using 20mm and 50 caliber guns and 40mm grenades. After the first pass, Col Lewane requested that fire be moved to within 25 to 50 meters from the road and the second attack was made using the same weapons. A third pass was made using M-18 (7.62 Miniguns) and 50 caliber side and rear guns. The Miniguns appeared to have little suppressive affect and the aircraft received several hits. Transmission warning lights, oil pressure, and temperature gauges indicated heavy damage and an immediate landing was made in the rice paddy east of Route 13. A check indicated the aircraft was safe to fly and the aircraft returned to QUAN LOI to ascertain the extent of damage. At 1130 hours, VUNG TAU was contacted for a replacement aircraft which arrived at 1300 and continued attacks on enemy troops, evacuation routes, assembly areas, and close support of elements occupying blocking positions.

Operations with armed Chinooks ended at 2015 hours. Numerous sorties were flown by armed UH-1B's both as cover for the armed Chinooks and against targets selected by Col Lewane.

RESULTS (U)

Enemy losses included:

- 270 KIA (Body Count)
- 300 KIA (Probable)
- 7 VC Captives
- 40 Small Arms
- 23 Crew Served Weapons
- 1633 Rounds of Ammunition

U) Friendly losses are as follows:

1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry

	<u>KIA</u>	<u>WIA</u>
Hq Troop		5
B Troop	7 (1 DOW)	32
C Troop	5 (2 DOW)	18
Total	12	55

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2d Battalion, 18th Infantry

	<u>KIA</u>	<u>WIA</u>
A Company	1	12
B Company	1	10
C Company	5 (1 DOW)	17
Total	7	39

Seven armored personnel carriers and four tanks were damaged. One personnel carrier and one UH-1D were destroyed.

CONCLUSION (U)

As the reaction forces continued to search the battle area, conclusive evidence was found that the 271st VC Regiment had been decisively defeated and again failed in its assigned mission to destroy U.S. armored forces along Route 13. The rout of 271st Regiment can be attributed to several significant facts:

From the first indication of contact until the VC withdrew in defeat, Lt Col Lewane was in complete command of the situation. At the time of contact, the squadron was under OPCON 2d Battalion, 18th Infantry. Because he had complete control of the situation, subordinate elements of the 2d Battalion, 18th Infantry were placed under his control when committed to the battle. Except for short periods of time when he returned to refuel, he was over the battle area. During his absence, he had his S-3 replace him to control the action and coordinate the fire support. Col Lewane was in constant communication with his troop commanders, artillery observers, forward air controllers, and gunships. He coordinated all the fires to insure that the maximum amount of uninterrupted firepower could be brought to bear on the enemy forces.

Lt Col McChrystal's plans for deployment of the rapid reaction force saved many valuable minutes, preventing a larger number of VC from withdrawing.

The decision of General DePuy to divert helicopters for the lift of 2d Battalion, 18th Infantry, coupled with the movement of B Company by vehicle to the pickup zone out to a minimum, the time between landing of the two companies.

Preplanned airstrikes were available for diversion to the area of contact and subsequent close air support was continuous. There was unlimited support with varying quantities and types of ordnance.

Medium and heavy caliber artillery was available within range of the battle area and rapidly responded to requests for fire by Col Lewane.

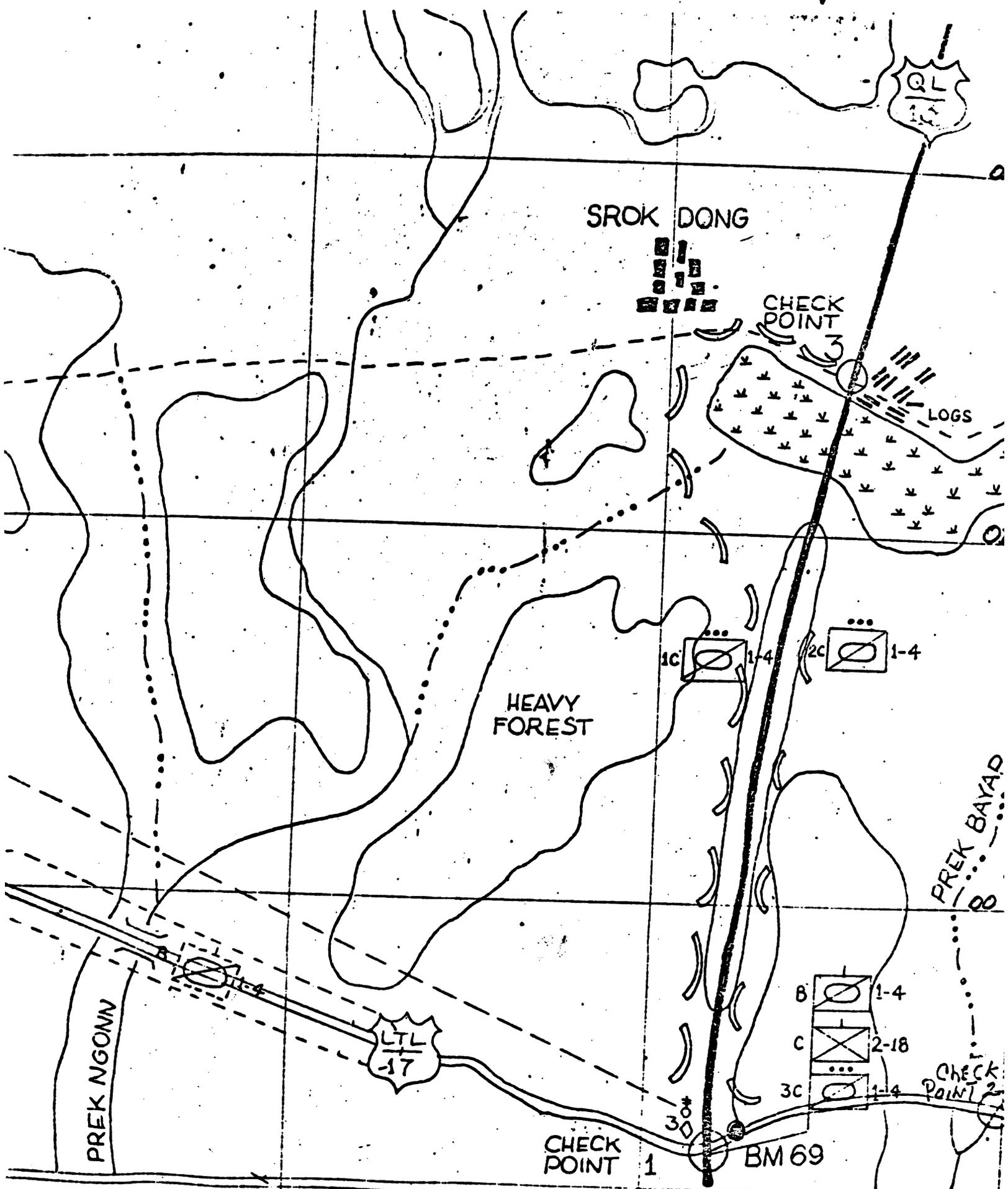
Troop C was not initially engaged and was available for immediate reinforcement on Col Lewane's order.

The tremendous base of fire laid down by the tanks and personnel carriers, coupled with the tenacity with which personnel fought and the outstanding leadership given the men, were instrumental in overcoming the numerically superior VC force. As squad and platoon leaders were wounded or killed, assistants immediately assumed command so that at no time were the troops lacking direction.

The time contact was made is particularly significant. The battle started at 0938 leaving ten hours of daylight for the battle to develop, a reaction force to be committed, and a search of the battle area to be conducted after contact was broken. This denied the enemy the capability to police the area.

Weather conditions did not limit the ability of the forward air controllers or artillery observers to place effective fire on the enemy.

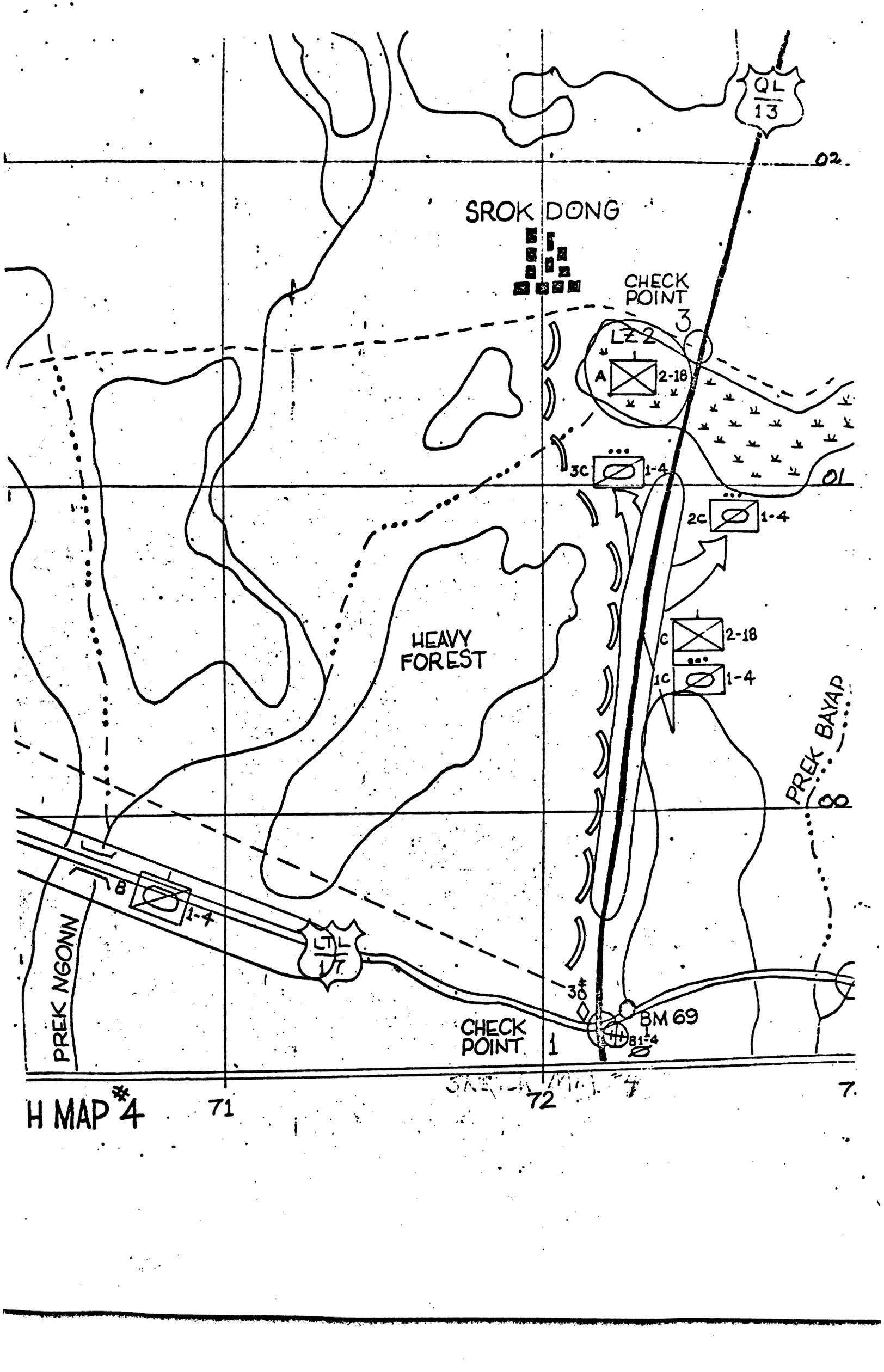
Incl -- MAP 1 - 1st Inf Div Troop Dispositions
MAP 2 - Area of Operation 1:50,000
MAP 3 - PICTOMAP Area of Operation 1:25,000
Sketch Maps 1 - 6
Overlay - Battle of HO KRIGNOU



ETCH MAP #3 71

SKETCH MAP #3 72

7.



SROK DONG

CHECK POINT 3

LZ 2

HEAVY FOREST

CHECK POINT 1

BM 69

QL
13

LTL
17

PREK NGONN

PREK BAYAP

H MAP * 4

71

72

7

02

01

08

ATTACHED INFANTRY ACTION - 30 June 1966

Commanding Officer Troop C

On 30 June 1966, Troop C was assigned a zone recon mission as part of a Squadron recon in force operation North of An Loc, RVII. The troop was assigned an operational area generally west of highway 13 with the axis of advance being the secondary roadway leading from BM 69 (Coords XT 721 994) to the west.

For this operation Company B (-) 1/18 Infantry Bn was attached to Troop C. This force consisted of 2 rifle platoons (platoons were understrength and consisted of about 30-33 men), a weapons platoon (-) of about 10 men and the company Hq group. One rifle platoon was attached to Troop B.

The infantry platoons were loaded aboard the 1st and 2d armored cavalry platoons of Troop C. Company Hq B 1/18 rode with the Troop CP group. The infantry weapons platoon rode with the 3d platoon of Troop C. The 3d platoon also had attached the troop mortars in battery.

After moving north on Highway 13 and crossing an AVLB emplaced at coords XT 721972 (later known as Golden Gate), the troop moved north to check point 1 at BM 69 and deployed westward.

The 3d platoon, troop mortars and the infantry weapons platoon established a strong point at this road junction (coords XT 722995). The infantry at this location dismounted and together with dismounted cavalry troopers set up ground security for the mortars and 3d platoon APC's.

The two infantry platoons and the infantry company Hq remained mounted as the troop moved to the west. The infantry remained mounted as the cavalry platoons maneuvered in line formation on either side of the east west roadway until the second stream was crossed. The jungle growth thickened at this location, the infantry platoons dismounted and moved ahead of the APC's. Just as the recon advance continued Troop B became engaged with a large VC force. The 3d platoon, Troop C reported receiving small arms fire at this same time.

The two dismounted infantry platoons and company Hq were remounted and the troop started its move back to BM 69 with the 1st platoon, Troop C in the lead. As the troop closed into the BM 69 strong point the 3d platoon was heavily engaged against Viet Cong automatic weapons fire coming from the North along both sides of the road. White phosphorous mortar rounds or rifle grenades began to fall into the area.

Upon arriving at the cross roads the infantry remained mounted initially but as they were being shot off the APC's the infantry CO requested permission to dismount.

The infantry dismounted and were given instructions to form a perimeter in the same areas assigned to the cavalry platoon on which they were riding. The 3d platoon, Troop C with troop mortars shifted to the north, took the NW corner of the intersection, the 1st platoon the NE and the 2d platoon the south side of the secondary road in both sides of highway 13. Heavy incoming fire continued and numerous infantry were wounded.

I saw the infantry company FO get hit by a white phosphorous round and one of their platoon leaders shot through the neck and killed along with his radio operator.

The troop was then ordered to move north along Highway 13 and relieve pressure on Troop B. There was no radio contact with the infantry at this time, heavy fire had then pinned down and there was insufficient time to contact the infantry leaders on the ground for reloading. The troop moved north leaving elements of the 3d platoon, the troop mortars and the infantry company (-) at Bii 69.

Later as the fight around SROK Dong quieted down and other elements of the 1/18 Infantry began to land at an LZ at coords XT 721004 the 1st platoon brought B 1/18 (-) forward to the main battle area (coords XT 724009). The company then came under control of the CO 1/18 Infantry who had just arrived in the area. The infantry company took up immediate positions to the east and west of the highway battle area. Later the company conducted sweeping actions to the west.

Troop B

30 June 66

KIA

1/Lt Night, David K
SFC Buckley, William R.
SSG Mills, Charles H.
Sgt Holton, Richard P.
Sgt Morgan, John D
Sp4 Patterson, Ronald R
PTC Marden, Bobby L.

IHT atch Trp B

WIA

Pfc Bennett, Wayne
Pfc Coloman, Clyde H

LMA

Sgt Jones, Clinton
Pfc Moore, Odio

WIA

SSG Killingsworth, Guy Jr.
SSG Smaltz, Henry E.
SSG Ovitt, William C.
Sgt Corricra, Alfred J.
Sgt Skolnekovich, Richard R
Sgt Kenawell, George C.
Sgt Charbonneau, Thomas D.
Sgt Wanner, Phillip E.
Sgt Smith, Richard L.
Sgt Owens, Samuel R.
Sgt Bently, John W.
Sgt Fuller, William T.
Sgt Lee, Curtis T.
Sgt Oden, George L.
Sp5 Duenas, Alfred G.
Sp4 Davidson Earl G.
Sp4 Jones, Fred Jr.
Sp4 Parker, Bobby J.
Sp4 Gilbert, Jesse E
Sp4 Fisher, William D
Pfc Meynoro, Stephen R.
Pfc Ethridge, Bobbio J.
Pfc Conley, James L

LMA

SFC Quijano, Norberto
SFC Barbadillo, Victoriano
SSG Vostech, Vlastinil
Sgt Ivy, William C
Sp5 Hudson, James H Jr
Sp4 Balswin, Thomas P
Pfc Fernandez, Diaz A
Pfc Alday, Frank T.

MIA

Kochany, Joseph W

Troop C

30 June 1966

KIA

Sgt Bailey Roy D.
Sp4 Prediger, Franz G.
Pvt Smith, Danny L.

HHT atch Trp C

WIA

PFC Holdon, Larry A.

DOH

Sgt Long, Donald R
Pfc Rogers, Roy R

WIA

2/Lt Cole, Charles T
Sgt Riddle, Rodger D.
Sgt Allison, John A.
Sgt Kilgore, Billy J.
Sgt Arrington, James E.
Sgt Vernan, Charles E.
Sp4 Stout, Daniel C.
Sp4 Martin, Lewis W.
Sp4 Travoluto, James R
Sp4 Callahan, John J Jr.
Sp4 Allson, Paul W.
Sp4 Lancy Larry L.
Sp4 Mc Clarin, Ronald.
Sp4 Stinson, Cecil E Jr.
Pfc Smith, Alexander A
Pfc Stephens, Polley E
PFC Ayala, Marrero A.
Pfc Thayer, Richard E
Pfc Holdon, Larry A

BATTLE OF HIGHWAY 13 AT BM 69

30 June 66 XT725030

Troop B was conducting an area reconnaissance from the "Golden Gate Bridge". We had our mission and after the meeting with the platoon leaders we crossed the bridge that was spanned by the AVLB and headed north.

The 36 elements were in the lead followed by 26 and 16 elements. The 36 elements were instructed to recon by fire after rounding the curve and it triggered a Viet Cong ambush. The vehicles immediately deployed left and right, each vehicle laying a base of fire, with 26 elements pushing to the lead vehicle to carry the seriously wounded to a Dust-Off pad located in a clearing on the other side of the bridge. Elements of Troop C were in charge of securing the Dust-Off position and Dust-Off proceeded as directed.

This is all I remember of that certain day for I was in the Dust-Off area waiting for a Dust-Off for I had been wounded myself.

/s/ ALFRED J. CORRERIA
/t/ ALFRED J. CORRERIA
SGT E5 Troop B
1st Sqn 4th Cav

BATTLE OF HIGHWAY 13
30 June 66 XT 725030

Troop B was conducting an area reconnaissance north on Highway 13 in Binh Long Province, along with Troop C and elements of the 1st Brigade.

Troop B was leading the armored column and reconning by fire to the flanks. At approximately 0930 hours the head of the column crossed the Cam Le (Golden Gate Bridge) XT724013 and was immediately fired upon by an undetermined number of Viet Cong. The volume of fire increased as the lead elements returned fire. At this time the troop commander estimated that the column had triggered a Viet Cong ambush of regimental size. The troop commander, Lieutenant Flores, immediately informed the squadron commander who was air borne at the time of the enemy ambush.

Meanwhile the troop deployed into defensive positions by staging vehicles to enable them to fire on both sides of the combat area. At this time the head of the column was receiving heavy recoilless weapons fire and the 3d platoon was heavily engaged.

The squadron commander immediately called in T.C. Air and friendly artillery fire, on both sides of the armored column, and at the same time committed troop C into battle. The 3d platoon had at this time suffered moderate casualties and was quickly reinforced by the tanks from the 1st, 2d and 3d platoons.

All platoons reported heavy contact on both flanks and the troops were inflicting heavy casualties on the Viet Cong, who by this time became disorganized under heavy fire from the 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry elements.

As the battle progressed, throughout the morning the 75's - 57 recoilless rifles had destroyed 1 tank and knocked out 2 others. Enemy mortar fire had also knocked out 3 APC's and at this time the casualties were immediately evacuated to the rear of the column. Throughout this evacuation there were countless acts of heroism. In most cases individual crews would abandon their destroyed vehicles to continue with the battle, or continued fighting on the ground with their individual weapons.

The battle continued throughout the day for six hours. After the Viet Cong had broken contact and retreated into the heavy elephant grass and jungle area, the estimated Viet Cong body count was well over 300 killed in action and several wounded prisoners captured. There were countless enemy weapons captured, to include several 75 and 57 recoilless rifles, dozens of automatic weapons and various types of small arms and ammunition.

The armored column remained at this scene of battle for the next few days and continued to search for the enemy. We found several shallow graves and evidence that several wounded Viet Cong had been carried off during the battle.

BATTLE OF HIGHWAY 13
30 June 66 XT725030
(CONTINUED)

After three or four days of searching the armored column returned to the LOC, refitted and rearmed and waited for the next mission.

/s/ANTHONY S MONIZ
/t/ANTHONY S MONIZ
1SG, Troop B
1st Sqdn, 4th Cav