

1/12th CAV 1967

Supplement to Unit History
1969



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Introduction

In 1969, the First Battalion, Twelfth Cavalry engaged in a variety of missions. Whether finding and destroying enemy arms caches, landing in a hot LZ, rescuing villagers harrassed by the Viet Cong, or ambushing a trail, the battalion accomplished its mission with expertise and valor.

During the first part of 1969, the battalion had the mission of disrupting enemy supply routes, halting infiltration, and destroying the enemy whenever he would stand and fight. The latter part of the year saw several new missions and responsibilities added to its "combat" missions as part of the effort towards Vietnamization of the war, both training Vietnamese units and working with the civilian population.

The first few months of 1969 saw a continuation of operations begun in 1968. In November of 1968, the First Cavalry Division (Airmobile) had moved to the III CTZ (Corps tactical zone) to assist in stopping the Tet Offensive. The 1/12 Cav landed at a small base called LZ Buttons at the base of Nui Ba Ra near the Song Be River. Their mission was to intercept and destroy infiltrating NVA units by making maximum use of their mobility.

Upon entering deserted rubber plantations and thick jungles, it became evident that 1/12 Cav's AO was used as a resupply area for transient enemy troops. In the months that followed, the

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battalion discovered peanut and potato fields and caches of typewriters, medical supplies, ammunition, clothes, and other equipment. The men of the 1/12 Cav accounted for 60 NVA killed in a series of sharp encounters.

The 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry became proficient in battalion sized moves and called eight IZ's home during the next six months. Their moves and diligent hunting provided them their share of the credit in so disrupting the enemy that he never began his Tet Offensive.

January

During January the 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry, operating under tactical control of the 3rd Brigade, continued its mission of blocking enemy infiltration in the vicinity of the Serge's Jungle Trail. January was a comparatively quiet month for the battalion. During the entire month the battalion had a few minor contacts and accounted for four NVA killed. They also captured assorted weapons and other equipment. January saw the battalion change IZ's several times. They started the month on IZ Buttons, later moved to IZ Odessa, and ended the month on IZ Carol. Combat operations were not seriously hampered by any of these moves.

Operation Cheyenne Sabre - LZ Cindy

On 1 February 1969, 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry received word that they might be moving in the near future, but that nothing was definite. On February third, plans were confirmed, and the battalion was on its way to Bien Hoa for redeployment in the Cheyenne Sabre AO. By February the sixth, the 1/12 Cav had started offensive operations from LZ Cindy in the Cheyenne Sabre AO. Almost immediately the companies in the field began finding signs of recent enemy activity: tunnels, bunkers, and trails with heavy recent use. It was only four days after starting operations out of LZ Cindy that they spotted their first enemy troops. On February 10, Charlie Company spotted three VC in a bunker complex, killed one and captured some documents. For about ten days, the battalion found only signs of the enemy. Then on February 20, Alpha Company made light contact. During the rest of February, the battalion accounted for 16 enemy KIA's and numerous captured weapons and equipment during a series of sharp engagements that involved at least one company of the battalion in a contact almost every day for the remainder of February and the first five days of March. The enemy was not yet ready to stand and fight. Finally, on March 6, the enemy decided to fight.

On March 6, Alpha Company was checking out a bunker complex when they came under heavy small arms and automatic weapons fire from an estimated company of NVA regulars. Alpha Company attempted to maneuver platoons to the north and south to determine the extent of the bunker complex and to flank the enemy force. All platoons were pinned down by intense enemy fire. Alpha Company called in scout teams, artillery, aerial rocket artillery, and air strikes. Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 9th Cavalry moved to support Alpha Company and also came under heavy contact and killed seven NVA.

Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry was combat assaulted in to support Alpha Company. The LZ was initially green but after the first lift of birds took off, the troops on the ground came under heavy fire from an estimated company of NVA armed with 2 x .51 cal. machineguns, 1 x .30 cal. machinegun, and numerous automatic weapons and B-40 rocket launchers. Additional ships were unable to land because of the intense fire. Eight sections of aerial rocket artillery were put in on the enemy positions, air strikes were placed on the positions, and then ARA worked over the area again. Again the lift birds attempted to land more troops. Again they met with intense fire from the ground. Finally, five birds

succeeded in inserting thirty fresh troops. The last bird, piloted by Warrant Officer Paul T. Keil, not only succeeded in inserting six fresh troops but evacuated six critically wounded men as well. WO Keil's ship was hit 30 times. Actions during the first week of March accounted for 27 NVA killed. For the rest of March, the enemy forces in the area evaded and avoided contact. The 1/12 Cav continued to weaken the enemy forces by discovering and destroying several caches of enemy weapons and other materiel.

Operations around LZ Jake

On April 16, the battalion again moved, this time to LZ Jake. Its mission was to stop enemy infiltration into the Fish Hook Area. The battalion was on LZ Jake for less than a week when the enemy placed indirect fire on the LZ. The battalion responded with artillery and 81mm mortars. The next morning, a patrol from Alpha Company discovered fresh blood trails and bandages. Three of the mortar rounds fired by Alpha Company had impacted on the enemy mortar positions. During the month at LZ Jake, 1/12 Cav encountered light enemy resistance and accounted for 14 enemy killed in scattered action. They also captured or destroyed an assortment of enemy supplies and equipment.

Phuoc Vinh

On May 13, the battalion moved to Camp Gorvad, Phuoc Vinh, OPCON to DIVARTY. There, they were responsible for the base defense of Camp Gorvad while the line companies conducted offensive operations in the mortar and rocket belt surrounding Phuoc Vinh. It was a relatively quiet period for the battalion with no significant ground actions. Phuoc Vinh was to be the lull before the storm. On June 13, the battalion started its move to LZ Grant. The entire battalion had not even moved to Grant before it got an indication of what its stay at LZ Grant was going to hold. On June 14, Charlie Company sprang an ambush that netted three NVA killed. The men of the battalion were to repeat that ambush of two or three NVA many times in the next six months.

LZ Grant

During their stay at LZ Grant, the men of the 1/12 Cav and their supporting artillery, aerial rocket artillery, and air strikes were to account for 594 NVA killed while suffering relatively light casualties themselves. When the enemy tried to move, the men of the 1/12 Cav ambushed him. When the enemy tried to attack, they withstood his fiercest attempts. And

when the enemy took shelter in the numerous bunker complexes in the 1/12 Cav's AO, they sought him out and destroyed him.

The battalion started making contact with enemy units even before the move to LZ Grant was completed. The contact remained relatively light until 29 June when Charlie Company found a bunker and hospital complex containing 97 bunkers. While checking out the complex, the company came under intense enemy fire. Two men were killed. Charlie Company returned the fire and then pulled back to call in artillery, aerial rocket artillery, and air strikes. On June 30, Charlie Company moved into the complex from the south. Delta Company, sent to support Charlie Company, moved into the complex from the north. They continued to check out the complex, discovering medical supplies and other equipment. That evening, Charlie Company established their night defensive position inside the bunker complex. On July 1, Charlie Company moved out of the complex and started to skirt the edge of it. On July 2, the company, still skirting the edge of the complex, again came under intense fire. Scout ships, artillery, ARA, and air strikes were called in. Two light observation helicopters were shot down by the intense enemy fire. The men of Charlie Company fought their way to the downed aircraft and rescued the crew members

not killed in the crash. Air strikes were put in on the enemy positions all day. Charlie Company then moved in to check out the area. Altogether, actions in and around the complex accounted for 36 NVA killed.

The battalion maintained contact with the enemy almost continuously during its stay at LZ Grant. The men of the battalion fought many fierce engagements. It is hard to pick one engagement and say that it is "typical" or to say that it is "the most important." Often it is impossible to judge the true significance of a battle until many years after it has been fought. In Viet Nam, this problem is even more difficult. Even the largest battles are small in comparison to the great battles of previous wars. In fact, the true significance of a battle may not lie in the number of enemy killed. While at LZ Grant, 1/12 Cav accounted for more NVA killed than the other two battalions in the Brigade combined, but the full effect that the battalion had on enemy supply, infiltration routes, and morale will not be known for many years, perhaps never.

One of the most successful encounters for the battalion in terms of enemy personnel killed took place on 11-15 August. On 8 August, Charlie Company found a large cache consisting of 153 x 82mm mortar rounds, 192 x B-40 rounds, 50 x 75mm recoilless

rifle rounds, 12 x 60mm mortar rounds, 600 Chicom grenades, 27 bangalore torpedoes, 1020 x .51 cal. rounds, 17,280 AK-47 rounds, 1 Chicom anti-tank mine, and 25 bicycles. Charlie Company remained in the same general area searching for additional caches.

On August 11, Charlie Company was logged. They moved out about 200 meters from their logistics site, when a man collapsed with heat exhaustion. The man was medevaced and the company started to establish their night defensive position at 1600 hours. Two men putting out trip flares and claymore mines spotted four NVA watching the company setting up its positions. The men opened fire on the NVA and pulled back into the perimeter. They had no sooner returned to the perimeter than the enemy opened fire with small arms, automatic weapons, B-40's, and RPG's. Charlie Company returned the fire and continued to dig in. The area had been arc lighted and Charlie Company took advantage of the large number of branches and fallen trees to place overhead cover on their positions. The fire fight continued throughout the night. The next morning Charlie Company started probing in all directions, trying to find a direction in which they could move out of the encircling enemy force. No matter which direction they tried,

they met with stiff enemy resistance. They were forced to spend August 12 in the same positions that they had occupied the night before. Again a fierce fire fight raged throughout the night, with artillery, ARA, and air strikes being called in to support the surrounded company. The next morning, the first platoon succeeded in finding a way out of the encircling enemy troops, and the company set up on a small knoll, again putting overhead cover on their fighting positions. There was no enemy attack that night. On August 14, the company was logged again. Every time the log bird came into the logistics site, it received fire about 150 meters out from a .30 cal. machinegun. After getting logged, the company again moved out, with the second platoon walking point. The point man spotted four NVA laying on the ground ahead of him, obviously part of an ambush element. He opened fire, killing one of them. The second platoon then pulled back and artillery, ARA, and air strikes were placed on the enemy position. The second platoon then moved up to recover their rucksacks. The enemy followed them back to the perimeter. Four NVA were spotted when they set off a trip flare and were killed with claymore mines. Charlie Company heard heavy movement all around their perimeter and received 20 x 60mm mortar rounds inside of the perimeter, but suffered no casualties.

The enemy started probing the perimeter with RPG's, B-40 rockets, and machinegun fire. Aerial rocket artillery, artillery, and spooky ships were called in. A flare ship remained in the area throughout the night. Sweeps of the battle area revealed the bodies of 75 NVA killed during the four days. Charlie Company was combat assaulted out of the area and sent back to the IZ for a much needed rest.

The IZ was not always to provide a rest for the men of Charlie Company. At 0045 hours 6 November, Bunkers 4 and 5, manned by Charlie Company, detected movement to their front. The men on the bunkers opened fire and mortar fire was called in on the area. A search of the area at first light revealed the bodies of six NVA sappers killed and large quantities of equipment and numerous blood trails left behind by the rest of the enemy force when it withdrew.

Another important action took place on September 24 when Echo Company, while checking out a bunker complex, made contact with an estimated enemy platoon. Echo company pulled back in order to let a Forward Air Controller call air strikes in on the area. The FAC pilot reported an enormous secondary explosion that threw debris 1500 feet in the air. The FAC pilot estimated the explosion to have been caused by 75 x 107 rockets and 200 x

82mm mortar rounds. When Echo Company moved in to check out the area, they found only bits and pieces of equipment and weapons. The entire area was devastated by the air strikes, 120 rounds of artillery that had been called in, and the enormous secondary explosion. Twenty-nine NVA were killed in the action.

Shortly after Charlie Company repelled the sapper attack on LZ Grant, Alpha Company made heavy contact. Late in the afternoon of November 11, Alpha Company started to set up its night defensive perimeter. They were aware that there were enemy troops in the immediate vicinity. Third platoon, fourth platoon, and the CP were all inside the perimeter and second platoon was moving to join the perimeter. Men from the third platoon were putting out trip flares. Just as the point man for second platoon spotted the third platoon, two of the men putting out trip flares were pinned down by automatic weapons fire from well concealed enemy bunkers. One man was killed by the initial burst of fire and the other was killed shortly after by a Chicom grenade. Alpha Company returned the fire and called in artillery and aerial rocket artillery. An enemy element tried to encircle the three platoons pinned down in the perimeter. The enemy element ran into the first platoon which was still about 100 meters back along the trail the other platoons had moved along.

The first platoon killed one NVA and halted the attempted encirclement. After an hour and a half of intense fighting, Alpha Company was able to pull back and call in air strikes on the enemy bunkers. Twenty-five NVA were killed in the action.

One of the most rewarding experiences for the men of Alpha Company came about a week later when they were attached to 2nd Brigade and sent north into Phuoc Long Province. There they conducted Chieu Hoi operations. Some local villagers had been so harrassed by the VC that they were hiding in the hills. The men of Alpha Company found a site where the villagers were suspected to be hiding. They then set up a defensive perimeter and invited the villagers to enter the safety of the American position. Despite some harrassing fire from some local VC, no casualties were suffered and thirty-seven men, women, and children heeded the message to Chieu Hoi, broadcast from the loudspeaker in the Alpha Company perimeter and written on leaflets dropped over the area.

Another important phase of the 1/12 Cav's operations started with the opening of FSB Vicky by the 2nd ARVN Airborne Battalion. Throughout the battalion's stay at LZ Grant, they worked closely with the ARVN's. There was an American team on hand to help with the construction of the Fire Base, and

Americans furnished radar operators for the ARVN's while training them in the use of the equipment. The 1/12 Cav also co-ordinated the use of air strikes and other assets available to the battalion for the ARVN's.

December - On the Move Again

On December 4, the battalion was airlifted to Bu Dop, Phuoc Long Province, where it relieved the First Battalion, Seventh Cavalry at FSB Jerri. Its mission was to counter a suspected attack against Bu Dop. The battalion minus was placed OPCON to the Third Brigade, and Bravo and Delta Companies were placed OPCON to Second Squadron, Eleventh Armored Cavalry Regiment for security of Rome Flow operations. Bravo and Delta Companies did their job well and not a single vehicle was lost to enemy action.

On December 14, the battalion moved to the Phuoc Long District where the construction of FSB Lee was started on December 14. The mission was to stop enemy infiltration on the Jolley Trail Complex. For the first time in the memory of most of the men then serving with the battalion, they were working in close proximity to civilian populations around the fire base. In the field the battalion often worked with the Popular and Regional Forces and CIDG reconnaissance platoons.

One of the most successful combined operations took place on December 21-22. Alpha Company and a CIDG recon platoon cordoned a village suspected to contain several VC. Popular Forces troops then searched the village and captured one of the leaders of the provincial Viet Cong infrastructure and another Viet Cong suspect.

Mobility and flexibility were the hallmarks of the First Battalion, Twelfth Cavalry during 1969. Throughout numerous moves, combat operations were almost continuous. Often combat operations commenced in the new area of operation before they ceased in the old area of operation, even when the two areas were in different provinces. The battalion's flexibility is amply demonstrated by the number of different missions that it undertook and completed during the year. The men of the 1/12 Cav demonstrated their ability to accomplish all missions whether purely combat or associated with pacification and Vietnamization.

Appendix A - Medal of Honor Nominees

In 1969, one man from 1/12 Cav was nominated for the Congressional Medal of Honor. That man was Sgt. Rodney J. Evans. A short account of Sgt. Evans heroic act follows.

On 18 July 1969, Delta Company was participating in offensive actions in Tay Ninh Province. At approximately 1000 hours, the second and third platoons were sent out of the company's night ambush position to assess bomb damage of an area where the company had encountered stiff enemy resistance the day before. After moving about 150 meters, third platoon came upon a trail heading northeast to west. At this time, a Kit Carson Scout informed the platoon that the trail was booby-trapped; they therefore moved short of but parallel to the trail in a north-northeast direction when they heard movement to their front. Recon by fire was employed, and the platoon continued its move, aware of the likely presence of an enemy force. The platoon had moved about 25 meters when the point squad was hit by a command detonated Chicom claymore mine which inflicted several casualties. Sergeant Evans was directing a squad about ten meters to the left of the point squad. On impact, Sergeant Evans observed a second Chicom claymore mine about five feet to his right. Crawling forward on the ground and yelling "mine" to his comrades,

Sergeant Evans leaped on the mine and was jolted by a muffled explosion that lifted him a foot off the ground. Even with the administering of emergency first aid treatment, Sergeant Evans succumbed to his wounds.

Appendix B - Winners of Silver Star (1969)

Lieutenant Colonel
Stotser, George R.

Captain
Jones, Melvin D.
Ruthven, Arlin C.
Reaume, Paul E.
Waytowich, Nicholas

First Lieutenant
Butcher, Larry J.
Gaddis, Walter D.
Hawkins, John W.
Jones, Anthony L.
King, James C.
Nix, James A.

Enlisted Personnel
Barr, Stanley H.
Barr, John C.
Clark, William F.
Cordero, Rudy
Clark, Basil
Frost, Barry L.
Kerstetter, Ernest
Lee, Stanley E.
Lundquist, Roy W.
Mann, Michael
Marshall, Joseph
McFadden, William F.
Nava, David
Orzechowski, Thomas
Philpot, Gary L.
Rossi, Kenneth T.
Rutherford, Roy L.
Steen, Raymond E.
Thieleman, John L.
Taylor, Leon
York, George M.

Appendix C - Winner of Bronze Star with "V" (1969)

Chaplain

Moretti, Eduard

First Lieutenant

Hawkins, John W.

James, Charles F. III (1 OLC)

Miller, Perry B.

Wright, Richard

Zeller, Arthur

Enlisted Personnel

Ambrosio, Frank C.

Bernard, Paul L.

Bowers, Walter R.

Butler, Dennis L.

Layman, Patrick

Chamberlain, Richard

Colledge, Ted L.

Coleman, John A.

Cowans, Donald R.

Coleman, Ronald E.

Dannelly, William G.

Dingeldein, Roger T.

Diaz-Diaz, William

Davis, George A.

Dodson, Billy (1 OLC)

Fox, Edwin

Gormann, William

Hubhart, David (1 OLC)

Hemmesch, Robert E.

Hawkins, Roy (1 OLC)

Helmick, Maurice R.

Irving, John D.

Imanka, Earl

Jones, James C. Jr.

Johnson, Michael

Kickelman, Stephen J. (1 OLC)

Kronapka, John R.

Leopard, Jackie D.

Lassiter, Dennis D.

Lama, Anthony

Lane, James E.

Second Lieutenant

Duffy, Robert F.

Grant, Terry J. (1 OLC)

Gifford, Thomas C.

King, James C.

Lundquist, Roy W.

Mason, Wayne

Mann, Edward

Nowell, James E.

Orzechowski, Thomas (1 OLC)

Ortega, Abraham

Plowman, William G.

Pinter, Timothy E.

Phillips, William F.

Pietrezweski, Conrad

Quinlin, James

Rutherford, Roy C.

Rossi, Kenneth T.

Randall, Donald B.

Snow, Terry L.

Schilt, John A.

Steele, James R.

Stuart, Charles

Sosbe, Edgar

Slaggy, James E.

Schwartz, Leroy H.

Schiefelbein, Donald B.

Smith, David R.

Smith, Martin J.

Savelle, Joseph

Smith, Howard M.

Tkaczyk, Stanley

Timmons, Barry G.

Tuttle, Stuart F.

Teti, James V.

Torres, Thomas J.

Thompson, Ronald L.
Toland, William G.
Wilson, Roy L.
Wilfore, Christopher H.

White, Donald D.
Watson, Lennie
Young, James R.
Zeigler, Melvin W.

Appendix D - Commanding Officers

LTC George L. Macgarrigle	Beginning of year	to 4 June
LTC George R. Stotser	5 June	to 26 October
LTC Robert Alexander*	27 October	to 31 October
LTC Roderic E. Ordway	31 October	to end of year

* LTC Alexander was killed on October 31 when his command and control helicopter crashed. He had been in command of the battalion for only four days.