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HEADQUARTERS 1ST BATTALION 12TH INFANTRY  
4TH INFANTRY DIVISION  
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96262

AVDDB-121

31 January 1970

SUBJECT: Combat Operations After Action Report  
Operation PUTNAM WILDCAT

TO: Commanding Officer  
2d Brigade 4th Infantry Division  
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1. This After Action Report covers the participation of the 1st Battalion 12th Infantry "Red Warriors" in Operation Putnam Wildcat from 1 November 1969 to 17 January 1970.
2. The mission of the 1st Bn 12th Inf was to interdict enemy infiltration into the Bong Son Plains area by intensive search and destroy missions in the upper An Lao Valley.
3. The Task Organization as of 1 November 1969, was A, B, C, D and E Companies with B Battery 4/42 Artillery as Direct Support. 2 Platoon C Co 4th Engineers was attached for operations. The following organizational changes took place during the operation.

26 December	Add	1 Sec C Battery 4/42 Artillery
2 January	Add	C-1/22
4 January	Add	1A-1/22, 3A-1/22
7 January	Add	2A-1/22
13 January	Delete	A-1/22, C-1/22
16 January	Add	1A-1/22, C-1/22
17 January	Delete	1A-1/22, C-1/22
	Delete	1 Sec C Battery 4/42 Artillery

4. The following chronological sequence of significant events is provided as a guide to operations in the area of interest.

#### November

On 1 November 1969 the 1st Bn 12th Inf returned to the operational control of the 2d Bde, 4th Inf Div. This change of control ended the "Red Warriors" participation in Operation Washington Green, attached to the 173d Airborne Brigade. The change in operational control did not significantly alter the mode of operation of the Bn and the 1st Bn 12th Inf continued intensive search and destroy operations in an effort to interdict the enemies infiltration and resupply routes through the An Lao Valley into the Bong Son Plain area.

On 1 November, at BS768189, D Co observed 3 enemy crossing a stream from the north, artillery and small arms were employed. When sweeping the area they found 1 KIA, and 1 enemy soldier surrendered bringing with him 1 B40 launcher with sight. Interrogation of the Chieu Hoi revealed that he was a part of a company size element moving through the area, (2nd Bn, 2nd Rgt). The Chieu Hoi also indicated that 3 other members of his unit had been KIA by artillery in support of D Co.

On 2 November at BS746105 B Co SRP observed an estimated 20 individuals, NVA/VC, with rucksacks and small arms to include 1 light machine gun. Artillery and 4.2" mortar fire as well as small arms was employed. A sweep of the area produced negative results or findings. 3rd Plat C Co 1st Bn 12th Inf found 7 graves at BS695166. 3 were very new and 4 approximately 2 weeks old. All were killed by artillery fired by B-4/42 from FSB TAPE, in support of operations conducted by C and D Co's in the immediate area.

On 3 November, C Co 1st Bn 12th Inf engaged 3 enemy in the vicinity of BS703167 with small arms and gunships. A search of the area revealed fresh blood on a tree but negative further.

On 4 November, the 2 Plat of B Co engaged 5 enemy in a cave complex at BS754085 resulting in 1 enemy KIA; 3 CIA WIA; 1 Hoi Chanh; 2 AK-47's CIA. The Co CP and 3 Plat moved in to reinforce the contact. In the vicinity of BS778101 the Recon Plat engaged 3-4 enemy. Small arms fire was exchanged and artillery was employed. A sweep of the area produced negative results.

On 5 November B Co(-) continued to work the cave complex, discovering 5 more enemy KIA from the previous day; 1500 lbs of rice CIA which was destroyed. The Recon Plat at BS783098 spotted and engaged 1 individual with small arms. The enemy employed small arms and grenades from 2 or 3 different locations. Artillery was employed on the SEL. Results include 2 possible enemy KIA and 2 US slightly WIA. The US WIA resulted from approximately 6 grenades thrown by the enemy.

On 14 November, while conducting a RIF vicinity 757902 the 1st squad of the Recon Plat surprised and captured 1 VC/NVA carrying 2 US grenades.

On 15 November in the vicinity of BS765163 the 3 Plat C Co engaged 2 enemy observed following the platoon. The enemy fled with unknown results. Shortly thereafter 3 enemy were sighted approximately 150 meters out and were engaged with small arms with unknown results.

On 17 November, in the vicinity of BS783093 the 2 Plat A Co found a fresh

grave containing 1 enemy killed by artillery approximately 1 week old. At approximately 1354H A Co initiated contact with an estimated 9-11 enemy; small arms fire and grenades were exchanged resulting in 1 US KIA and 2 US WIA. While moving from the landing zone in the same vicinity 2 Plat A Co engaged 1 enemy with small arms. The result was 1 enemy KIA. 2 Plat B Co while conducting a RIF along a ridge line spotted and engaged with small arms 1 enemy, results 1 enemy KIA. 2 Plat D Co spotted 4 individuals at BS773182, artillery was employed. 1 Plat D Co swept the area and captured 1 enemy wearing US fatigues that had been wounded by artillery. At 1732H the POW died resulting in 1 enemy KIA.

On 18 November, A Co continued to search area of contact of previous day. At BS783097 they engaged 1 enemy resulting in 1 KIA. At BS782099 enemy initiated small arms fire. Small arms fire was exchanged with unknown enemy casualties and 1 US WIA. B Co at BS751085 while checking out a cache of ammunition, (13 B40 rounds, 25 82mm rounds, 12 60mm rounds), captured 1 VC/NVA who was carrying a machine gun bipod.

On 19 November, while developing the contact area at BS781096 B Co again observed 1 individual, small arms fire was exchanged, negative friendly casualties and unknown enemy losses. Recon Plat while conducting intensive Ivy Patrolling in the vicinity of BS753070 sighted 3 VC/NVA, however, while moving toward the enemy location darkness fell.

## December

On 2 December Recon Platoon at BS744168, found the remains of 6 individuals approximately 1 month old. The remains were evidence of the 29 October contact which D Co had in the immediate area. Extensive 4.2" mortar fire has been employed with very significant results. A SRF from C Co at BS749087 found 1 KIA NVA in a hammock that appeared to have been dead for approximately 6 months. Recon Plat at BS702094 on 9 December while checking out a trail and rice field, engaged 2 VC/NVA at a distance of 40 meters, killing 1. At BS703092 engaged another enemy with negative results.

On 10 December, Recon Plat in the vicinity of BS707099 engaged 1 VC/NVA at 75 meters with small arms, a search of the area produced negative results.

On 14 December, A Co at BS787106 received 2 bursts of automatic weapons fire resulting in 1 US WIA. Small arms and artillery were employed. A sweep of the suspected area produced negative results. 3 Plat C Co engaged 1 individual on 18 December at approximately 150 meters, vicinity BS677208. A sweep of the area produced 2 NVA rucksacks with bullet holes in them.

On 20 December, 3 Plat C Co engaged 2 individuals in the vicinity of BS719218 resulting in 1 KIA.

On 22 December, 2 Plat B Co while conducting an Ivy patrol in the vicinity of BS770209 engaged 1 individual with small arms. The individual fled in an unknown direction but was believed to have been wounded. 2 Plat C Co while Ivy patrolling in the vicinity of BS667213 observed 5 individuals at approximately 500 meters. They were engaged with 4.2" mortars, gunships and small arms resulting in 2 enemy KIA, 1 CIA and 1 AK-47 CIA.

On 23 December, vicinity of BS762212 2 Plat B Co while conducting intensive Ivy patrolling along a recently used path, initiated contact with an unknown size enemy element resulting in 4 enemy KIA. 2 Plat C Co at BS674213 spotted

3 individuals with weapons at approximately 800 meters. They employed 4.2" mortar fire. A sweep of the area produced 1 Chicom radio similar to a PRC-25.

On 24 December, 2 Plat B Co while checking area of contact, (BS764222), found miscellaneous equipment, several bunkers, 2 fresh graves, resulting in 2 more enemy KIA. At BS764219 they received small arms fire and 1 B40 rocket resulting in 3 US WIA and 1 US KIA. The enemy B40 gunner was KIA. A further search and development of the area was delayed due to the Christmas Cease Fire period. 1 light Machine gun CIA.

A Co 1/12 on 26 December while checking a small bunker complex in the vicinity of 756223 engaged and captured a wounded enemy soldier.

On 27 December, 1 Plat C Co at 675215 spotted 6 VC in the open near the river at that location; small arms were employed and 7 more came into the open. 4.2" mortars were employed resulting in 2 possible KIA. 3 Plat D Co at BS701220 while checking fresh signs engaged 4 individuals, believed 2 male and 2 female, resulting in 1 enemy KIA.

1 Plat C Co on 29 December, at BS674207, found a fresh grave estimated to be 1 day old. The individual had been killed by machine gun fire. It is believed the individual was killed during the contact of 27 December.

On 31 December a squad size ambush from 2 Plat B Co at coordinates 728148 detected movement 20-30 meters out. Ambush sprung employing fragmentation grenades, M-16 and M-79. Automatic weapons fire was directed at the ambush with negative friendly casualties. Enemy losses were unknown.

## January

On 1 January, a squad size element in a defensive ambush in the vicinity of BS682207 while returning to their patrol base, surprised and detained 1 enemy who appeared to be observing the company perimeter.

On 2 January, the 1st Bn 12th Inf began operations with C Co 1st Bn 12th Inf attached, in the northern An Lao Valley. At approximately 1600H vicinity BS677199, 2 Plat C Co 1/12 sighted 5-7 individuals in an open potato field, they were engaged with small arms and gunships. The enemy fled to the treeline and a sweep of the area found 1 duffle bag and a blood trail leading to the west. The blood trail was followed until lost in a rocky area; a further search was stopped because of darkness.

On 4 January, A-1/22 was attached to the 1/12 continuing intensive search and destroy missions in the upper An Lao Valley. A Co 1/12 at Patrol Base, coordinates 781193 received at 2030H 4 rounds of 81mm mortar fire from the northeast. Artillery and 81mm mortars were employed with unknown enemy casualties. There were 6 US WIA resulting from the enemy attack. D Co 1/12 while conducting intensive Ivy patrols in the vicinity of BS696238 found numerous fresh signs of enemy activity around the bunker complex. 3-6 enemy were observed fleeing from 1 hootch and were taken under fire with small arms. The results were 1 enemy KIA and 1 AK-47 CIA. There were no friendly casualties.

On 5 January 1 Plat C Co at the coordinates 667216 sighted and engaged 10-15 enemy with M-16 and machine gun fire approximately 600 meters away. The known enemy location was 663215 on a trail running along the An Lao River. 3 Plat C Co 1/12 was air lifted to BS662216 and swept through the contact area, finding 7 rucksacks filled with rice. C Co 1st Bn 22nd Inf along with the TAC Cp

from 1/12 at 687243 received 5-6 bursts of enemy initiated automatic weapons fire, and machine gun fire 10-15 meters from the point element. Machine gun and small arms fire was returned with no friendly casualties taken and unknown enemy losses.

On 6 January, C Co 1/12 sweeping area of contact from 5 January found 1 enemy KIA, believed from previous day and 1 more rucksack, bringing the total to 8. C Co 1/22 and the TAC CP 1/12 while developing a massive bunker complex in vicinity of BS691240, of 50-60 fighters 1 week old, engaged and killed 1 enemy soldier and CIA 1 AK-47. No US casualties resulted.

On 9 January, D Co conducting intensive Ivy patrols came upon a booby trap at BS703253. 2 mine shaped charges were found on an LZ to be command detonated upon the entrance of a helicopter. It is noted that though numerous booby traps of the whip variety, punji pits and punji stakes along the trails, this was only the second incident of an explosive booby trap found in the An Lao Valley area. The first was also discovered by D Co 1/12 on 6 January in vicinity BS691241. In that case a trip wire was attached to a Chicom grenade that malfunctioned when tripped. Both the booby traps were in the upper extremes of the An Lao Valley near the II Corp border. The Recon Plat 1/12 conducting extensive Ivy patrols vicinity BS677235 discovered numerous trails recently used. At coordinates 675233 2-3 individuals were engaged by the Recon Plat at 20 meters, resulting in 1 enemy KIA and a blood trail indicating 1 wounded. In the vicinity of BS674232 a large hospital complex consisting of 25 hootches 10x15x30' were found. Complex was large enough to accommodate 300 individuals. C-1/22 and the TAC CP 1/12 at BS680250 spotted 2 enemy individuals advancing toward the point element. Red Leg road runner was employed to drive the individuals into an ambush, with negative results. At BS686244 enemy initiated contact with C-1/22 and TAC CP 1/12 at 15 meters, killing the scout dog. The contact area was searched in detail with negative results.

On 10 January D Co 1/12 at 1404H in the vicinity of BS705250 initiated small arms fire on 3 individuals. Sporadic enemy fire was returned, negative US casualties. 1 AK-47 was CIA. At 1551H in the same location enemy initiated small arms from a bunker. US engaged with small arms the result was 1 enemy KIA. More fire was received from snipers in other positions resulting in another enemy KIA. There were no US casualties. A-1/22 conducting Ivy patrols vicinity 735212 sighted 2 enemy 25 meters out. US initiated fire and received AK-47 fire in return. Red Leg was employed, and the area was swept with negative results.

11 January, A Co 1/12 conducting an intensive RI\* approximately 11 kilometers to the northeast of LZ TAPE for purposes of interdiction of avenues of approach to the 173d Airborne Brigade's pacification area of operation. D Co 1/12 in the vicinity of BS710257 initiated small arms fire on 1 individual resulting in 1 enemy WIA, CIA. At the same location D Co initiated small arms on 1 individual in a bunker, the result was 1 enemy KIA. No US casualties resulted.

On 12 January D Co 1/12 conducting a sweep through a bunker complex in the vicinity BS711251 received enemy initiated fire from 1 individual in a fox hole 30 meters from the point element. D Co returned a heavy volume of small arms fire resulting in 1 enemy WIA, CIA. Dog handler received enemy small

arms wound in the ear.

On 13 January, D Co 1/12 closing the Patrol Base, BS729221, observed 3 enemy on a trail 75 meters away. US initiated small arms fire resulting in 1 enemy KIA and 3 rucksacks CIA. No US casualties were taken. B Co was extracted from Patrol Base BS729221 after D Co closed the location. A Co 1/22 was extracted and returned to the operational control of 1/22, as was C Co 1/22.

On 14 January, C Co upon extraction from Patrol Base, BS690201 received enemy automatic weapons fire approximately 800 meters away. C Co(-) conducted combat assault to sighted enemy location and swept the area with negative results.

On 15 January, extraction of the 1/12 from the An Lao Valley was begun in preparation for the redevelopment of Camp Radcliff and further to the southern portion of Base Area 226. D Co 1/12 was extracted from Patrol Base, BS729121 to LZ English. A Co was extracted from the vicinity of BS814208 to LZ English.

On 16 January C Co and E Co 1/12 were extracted from the vicinity of LZ Tape, BS744130 to LZ English.

On 17 January B Co and TAC CP were extracted from LZ Tape as 3 Bn 506 Inf 101st Abn Div (airtbl) took over operational control of the An Lao Valley.

#### 5. Intelligence:

a. Enemy activity for the period ranged from light to moderate. Intelligence reports indicated that the main elements of the 3rd NVA Division to the north and southwest areas of the AO. Due to the relative security of the mountainous areas surrounding the An Lao Valley it became apparent that the enemy had been using certain areas for regrouping, resupplying and training replacements.

b. Terrain: The Valley of the An Lao River is the predominant feature of the area. Since the valley floor has not been cultivated for a number of years, there are sections where heavy grass and brush offer good cover and concealment. Surrounding the valley are numerous steeply rising hills, ranging from 20 meters to 953 meters in height. The hills are covered with a thick growth of single and double canopy jungle. In the valleys there are numerous streams and large rock formations forming natural cover.

c. Weather: During the period of the operation the monsoon season began to dissipate. Precipitation varied from light to heavy and some rain occurred practically every day. Temperatures ranged from the middle 60's to 90 degrees. In the morning hours visibility was generally poor due to ground fog which stayed on the surrounding hills for a large part of each day making resupply by aircraft extremely tenuous. Winds during this period prevailed from the northwest and varied from 2 knots to 25 knots per hour.

d. Cumulative results of all units for the operation were: US losses 2 KIA, 17 WIA. US inflicted enemy losses were 47 VC/NVA KIA, (BC); 4 possible VC/NVA KIA; 8 VC/NVA CIA; 4 Hoi Chanhs; 11 small arms CIA; 1 Chicom radio CIA; 1700 lbs rice CIA, (destroyed); 300 lbs salt CIA, (destroyed); miscellaneous documents