

S-3 1/12

HEADQUARTERS, COMPANY B 1ST BATTALION 12TH INFANTRY  
4th Infantry Division  
APO San Francisco 96262

AVDDB-12I-E

15 May 1970

SUBJECT: Summary of Tactical Operations, 5-14 May 1970

1. Purpose: The purpose of this summary is to present the events surrounding the tactical operations of this command while operating in RATANIKIRI Province, Cambodia, during the period May 1970.
2. Scope: The following will deal with the entire operation with emphasis on the 12 May contact made with the enemy, the general scheme of maneuver employed; the fire support utilized; and a report of the results of the action.
3. Operations Summary:
  - a. 5 May: Preparation and tactical move by convoy from Camp Radcliff to LZ Oasis.
  - b. 6 May: Preparation for further tactical operations and insertion into Cambodia.
  - c. 7 May: Negative change except that 4 men from 2/B CA with Co C.
  - d. 8 May: Combat Assault to vicinity of LZ Patty Jean. Move by foot to vicinity YA 595446 and establishment of Night Location.
  - e. 9 May: Move generally west, found one large village complex and numerous living and storage structures throughout assigned AO. RIF of AO to detect likely enemy activity. Establish Night Location in vicinity YA 576471
  - f. 10 May: Continuation of 9 May mission with emphasis on movement to vicinity of Objective White. Ambushes established in AO. One ambush initiated 2 enemy KIA, negative friendly casualties. Night Location established, vicinity YA 565457.
  - g. 11 May: Movement to LZ and preparation for extraction to LZ Commanche. Establishment of Night Location vicinity LZ Commanche and preparation for further deployment the following day.
  - h. 12 May: Initiation of Search and Destroy Mission to NE of FSB. Contact made with estimated company size enemy element, vicinity YA 457647. Contact broken at nightfall.

i. 13 May: RIF and Sweep of contact area and movement to NW; establishment of Night Location vicinity YA 449648 and ambushes; preparation for exploitation of contact site.

j. 14 May: Movement to flank and rear of contact area; sweep toward suspected bunker complex; movement to and establishment of Night Location.

k. 15 May: Movement to FSB Commanche by foot; extraction to Plei Djereng, establishment of integrated Battalion Defense at Plei Djereng.

l. 16 May: Motor movement to Camp Radcliff from Plei Djereng.

4. 12 May Contact: On 12 May 1970 Co B, 1st Bn 12th Inf, 4th Inf Div, was engaged in search <sup>and destroy</sup> operations NE of FSB Commanche in BATANIKIRI Province, Cambodia. After proceeding the major portion of the day on an azimuth of 080 degrees Magnetic from the FSB, the company at 1530 hours assumed an azimuth of 40 degrees vicinity co-ordinates YA 6345. Continuing on this general AZ through thick wooded areas the company crossed an open area and entered another thick woodline. At 1620 hours the 1/B was designated to continue a reconnaissance of the area to the N and E with a squad sized element and recon the area adjacent to a possible night location. The platoon leader designated 1/1/B for this task and they immediately started on this mission. Approximately 1650 hours the squad moved across a small open field (40mX75m) into an area overgrown with underbrush. As they broke out of the thick brush they were engaged by an estimated squad (5-7 indiv) at a distance of approximately 50-75 meters, vicinity YA 457647. The point man actually detected the enemy and returned a sufficient volume of fire to warn his squad and allow them to deploy and return fire. During the initial exchange of fire the point man was mortally wounded and died instantly. At this time the squad was located 150 meters NNE of the proposed Night Location.

b. Maneuver: 1/B was immediately committed to reinforce the contact and obtain an estimate of the situation. The 1/1/B element was still receiving small arms fire (sporadic) when 1/B arrived in the vicinity. 1/B maneuvered 1 rifle squad (2/1/B), with M-60, under the control of his PSG, to the left to cover that flank and then continued to move the rest of the element forward to the contact site., crossing the open area as previously described. As 1/B linked up with his squad in contact, the enemy broke contact and firing ceased. 1/B then informed the Co CP of the situation and requested an element to cover his right flank. At this time 3/B and the Company CP were committed to 1/B right flank with the mission of covering the flank and being prepared to sweep the SEL on order. Link up of 1/B and 3/B was accomplished at approximately 1710 hours and 3/B was given the order to sweep the SEL. 3/B with Co CP then went on line and completely swept the contact area in depth for 125 to 150 meters to the NE on an AZ of 30 degrees. (See Appendix 1, Diagram 6). Upon completion of this initial sweep 3/B was ordered to consolidate his right flank and sweep back to the vicinity of 1/B and prepare to continue the sweep th the NW on order.

Meanwhile, 1/B recovered the body of their KIA (point man) and moved the 3/1/B squad with the platoon medic, <sup>3/2</sup> with the body and dispersed the 1/1/B squad to cover the withdrawal. 1/B was required to move approximately 75 meters south <sup>west</sup> to a preselected LZ for MEDEVAC. This LZ was southwest of the contact area approximately 75 meters and consisted of an open area with interspersed small trees. In order to secure and cut this LZ 1/B further requested 1 squad from 2/B (located in the vic of the proposed N.L.). 2/B was so tasked and 3/2/B moved to assist 1/B. By this time (1720 hrs) 3/B had consolidated on his right (N.E.), flank and had moved to within 30-40 meters of 1/B, in a covering position for 1/B. An enemy element of estimated platoon (-), (15 to 20 individuals) engaged 3/B and 1/B with small arms (AK 47) fire from the north and simultaneously an enemy machine-gun position 50 meters on the NE flank of the 3/B position commenced fire. The Co CP was separated from the 3/B element by approximately 75 - 100 meters and was located to the direct right flank of 3/B, on the left flank of the contact area. The CP continued to move another 15 meters when another enemy machine-gun position commenced firing from the N.W. (at 75 meters from the exposed 3/1/B squad from 1/B, which was acting as a carrying party for the KIA.) (See Appendix 2 - Diagram 2B) 3/B, and 1/B immediately returned a heavy volume of fire on the automatic weapon positions and employed M-79 on the SEL, 3/2/B also fired on the SEL. One man from 3/B was seriously wounded in the initial burst of enemy automatic weapons fire from the N.E. 3/B then attempted to consolidate his position and maneuver against the MG position on the NE. The 1/3/B maneuvered to the SE of the MG position which was placing effective fire on his platoon. At this time the Co CP was effectively cut off from both 1/B and 3/B by 20 enemy infantry. 2/B was tasked to employ one squad to the NE (right flank) and cover the rest of the company as it attempted to maneuver against the known enemy positions. This was immediately accomplished by the 1/2/B. During the heaviest portion of the contact the 3rd platoon medic, receiving the wounded man's call for help, moved directly into the heavy MG's field of fire and attempted to aid the wounded man. He was mortally wounded as he moved to within 30 meters of the gun position, where the wounded man lay. The 1/3/B squad leader who was continuing his attempt to maneuver against the MG position was also mortally wounded at this time. He was initially reported MIA as no confirming report had been submitted by his platoon. As darkness approached (approximately 1915 hrs) 1/B succeeded in withdrawing and consolidating his element (with 3/B providing covering fire) in a small ditch approximately 30 meters to the south of his exposed location. The KIA was left in the open area. 1/B then dispatched one reinforced squad around to the right flank, using a concealed route and under the cover of darkness in an attempt to maneuver and relieve the pressure on 3/B. The Co CP was successful in placing effective flanking small arms fire on the 20 enemy infantry advancing between the two automatic weapon positions manned by 6 men each, however they could not maneuver until darkness to rejoin the main body as the enemy had employed a 3rd automatic weapon (BAR) and an estimated 2 individuals on the NNE portion of the battle

area. One member of the 3 man CP executed fire and movement and succeeded in rejoining the 3/B element. At this time numerous voices and shouting was noted by the other two members of the Co CP to the direct rear (N) of the battle area. It is estimated that this element consisted of a headquarters and one reserve platoon, which was being employed forward and on the left flank of the battle area in a flanking maneuver in order to retain the lost momentum of the enemy attack through the middle, which had stalled due to the heavy amount of suppressive fire and accurately aimed small arms fire being placed on exposed enemy positions by the 1/B and 3/B combined with the effective flanking sniper and maneuver actions taken against the exposed enemy positions by the Co CP. The 4.2 inch mortar, which had previously been adjusted to within 100 meters of the Co CP location to the flank and rear of the SML were shifted ~~was~~ shifted 50 meters toward the closest friendly elements to destroy the enemy as he attempted to maneuver. Further, 2/B reported taking heavy automatic and semi-automatic weapons fire from 10-15 enemy positioned 50 meters to his NE and also from 4 to 5 enemy which had successfully maneuvered to the NW between the 1/B and 3/B positions, approximately 50-60 meters from the 2/B position. 2/B moved a squad sized element (2/2/B) to neutralize the individuals between his position and that of 3/B. (See Diagram 3B). This was accomplished successfully and the enemy between the two platoons were forced to rejoin their main elements. 2/B then returned to the 2/B location, consolidated that position, and reconstituted the reserve. At this time the squad dispatched from 1/B to assist 3/B's flanking movement had also succeeded in joining the third platoon on the right flank. The wounded man was recovered by the acting 3/B platoon leader and MEDVAC of the wounded man was completed at approximately 2245 hours, that evening. The entire 3/B (Reinf) element was then withdrawn intact with the Co CP to the 1/B position and a hasty perimeter was established, 3/2/B was then moved to rejoin the 2/B element (see Diagram 3B), and 2/B was issued a warning to move forward NNE and consolidate with 1/B and 3/B elements on order. This linkup maneuver was accomplished without incident by approximately 0150 hours 13 May, and a defensive perimeter was consolidated and established for the night. (See Diagram 4B). At first light a RIF was dispatched from 2/B to clear the old (proposed) night location to the SSW and returned without incident. At approximately 0930 2/B was ordered to move to the SML and attempt to recover the body of the 3/B medic and locate the individual MIA (1st Sq Ldr, 3/B). Upon sweeping to the NE (right) portion of the SML 2/B located the body of the 3/B <sup>medic</sup> within 30 meters of the NG position and later confirmed the MIA as KIA. The Squad Leader (1/3/B) had succeeded in maneuvering to within 10 meters (approx) of the NG position on the flank and killed the assistant gunner with a shot through the head. The enemy body was still at that location. Continuing his sweep, 2/B advised that enemy east 3-4 indiv, were attempting to move to his S and SE. Apparently the enemy were moving through the SML and recovering enemy dead. 2/B was ordered to return to the night location and upon his return was given the order to move by an alternate route and recover all 3 KIA's. (See Diagram 5). This was accomplished with the assistance of 1/B and all KIA's were evacuated by helicopter at approximately 1100 hours that morning.

At 1230 hours the company moved directly west approximately 800-900 meters and north 400 meters and prepared to establish a night defense. The next morning (14 May) the entire element moved directly east into the rear (NW) of the SEL and completed a wide NW to SE sweep of the entire area. (See Diagram). Numerous blood trails and pools of dried blood were noted throughout the indirect fire area and enemy equipment (Belts, Canteen covers, carrying cases, personal effects, shirt, rucksack, and documents) were found. The company continued on a SE AZ for 400 meters toward a suspected bunker complex and then assumed a AZ of 260 magnetic, in an attempt to locate same. No bunkers were found although numerous ant-hills were noted which must have appeared as bunkers from the air. The entire company continued to move through the SEL with negative results and established a night location at 1630 hours that same day. Movement to the FSB and extraction to Plei Djereng the next day (15 May) was accomplished without incident.

C. Fire Support. Direct support 105 Howitzer and 4.2 in Mortars were employed to the flanks of the SEL initially. Later, the 4.2 mortars were shifted behind the center of the SEL and dropped to within 50 meters of friendlies (Co CP). 105 fires were employed on the NE (right) flank as blocking fires and against suspected enemy positions in that area. Gunships were employed after initial contact and 105 fires were lifted on request of the pilots. 155 Howitzers were employed to the NW (left) flank when 4.2 was shifted to the center and rear of the battle area. When the 4.2 mortars and the heavy artillery was shifted direct hits on known enemy locations to the rear (North) of the battle areas were observed.

#### D. Casualties:

Friendly: 4 KIA by small arms, 3 WIA, 2 by fragments and 1 by small arms.

Enemy: Estimated 12 KIA by small arms, based on reports from sub-elements, as follows:

GP - 5 KIA  
1/B - 3 KIA  
2/B - None  
3/B - 4 KIA

Only one enemy body was physically found by 2/B, however 3 distinct blood trails were noted during this initial sweep. Estimated 20 enemy KBA based on abundance of blood and the 20 dried blood pools counted during the NW to SE sweep of the SEL by the entire company.

5. The reason that 2/B was committed in the manner described is due to the fact that, initially the company did not have any other forces effectively

employed to cover the company rear end right (RE) flank against enemy  
 maneuvering elements, we did not have any other reserves formed available  
 to it until we arrived in the vicinity of approximately 1930 hours  
 that evening. I/3 also was tasked to provide security for a stationary  
 radio relay station with Battalion headquarters, which was under the control  
 of the company first sergeant. This was essential as radio communications  
 were essentially poor due to prevailing atmospheric conditions.

GAC

SAF J. SMITH  
 G-1, Infantry  
 Company

Attachments:

- 1- PHOTOCOPY (1/4 x 16)
- 2- " (1/4 x 16)
- 3- " (1/4 x 16)
- 4- " (1/4 x 16)
- 5- "

Distribution:

- 1 CO 1/12 INF
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