

AVDDA-BRAD

4 June 1967

SUBJECT: Combat Operations After Actions Report (RCS: MACV J-3132)

THRU Commanding Officer  
1st Bde, 4th Inf Div  
ATTN: AVDDA-BRC  
APO San Francisco 96265

REGRADED ~~FOUO~~ UNCLAS.  
BY LTC LYNCH  
SFC Presley 53 SFC  
19 Jul 71

TO: Commanding General  
4th Infantry Division  
ATTN: AVDDH-CG  
APO San Francisco 96262

- 1.(c) Name or identify and/or type of operation: FRANCIS MARION (DUC CO III): Search and Destroy Operation.
- 2.(c) Dates of Operation: 260720 May 1967 -- 261800 May 1967.
- 3.(c) Location: PLEI DOC (YA 738311 and YA 738314).
- 4.(c) Command Headquarters: Headquarters, 3d Battalion, 8th Infantry.
- 5.(c) Reporting Officers: Lieutenant Colonel Lynch, 3d Battalion 8th Infantry, Commander.
- 6.(c) Task Organization:
  - 3/8 Inf: A 3/8 Inf
  - B 3/8 Inf
  - C 3/8 Inf
  - C 6/29 Arty (105) (DS)
  - A 5/16 Arty (155SP) (Reinforcing)
- 7.(c) Supporting forces:
  - a. C/6/29 (DS) provided close in and blocking fires, firing a total of 410 rounds in support of the operation.
  - b. A/5/16 (Reinforcing 6/29) provided close-in and blocking fires, firing a total of 609 rounds in support of the operation.
  - c. B/5/16 (General Support Reinforcing 4/42) provided blocking fires, firing a total of 198 rounds in support of the operation.
  - d. C/5/16 (GSR 4/42) provided blocking fires and fired 210 rounds in support of the operation.
  - e. D/5/16 (GS) provided blocking fires and fired 316 rounds in support of the operation.
  - f. C/1/92 (GSR 6/29) provided blocking fires and fired a total of 243 rounds in support of the operation.

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g. B/6/29 (DS 3/2) provided blocking fires and fired a total of 94 rounds in support of the operation.

h. A/6/14 (GS 175/8") provided blocking fires and fired 33 rounds in support of the operation.

i. B/6/14 (GS 175/8") provided blocking fires and fired 33 rounds in support of the operation.

j. Artillery fires were effective as blocking and harrassing fires.

k. Air: One immediate request for air support was forwarded through the FAC to the Air Force. There were a total of two AIE sorties flown and both were directed at a suspected mortar position at coordinates YA 727321. Results of the strike are unknown.

l. US Army Aviation: A total of 10 gunship sorties were flown during the contact. Six sorties were used as an aircap in security roles and four sorties were utilized in direct support of ground forces as close-in support. Gunships were requested through Brigade Headquarters and arrived on station 23 minutes after initial request was submitted. Continual support was requested and received until gunships were released at 261535 May 1967.

8.(c) Intelligence: The terrain in the contact area is primarily single canopy on top of ridges and double canopy in the draws and sides of ridges. Beneath the canopy it is generally open with scattered brush and trees throughout the area. The brush becomes less dense the further up it is on the ridge. On the low ground, the undergrowth is very heavy and thick, with overhead leaves and vines. Trees are 100 to 150 feet tall. 12 to 30 inches in diameter. Scattered throughout the area are numerous smaller trees. Fields of fire and observation are limited and restricted to 50 meters at the maximum.

Weather at the time of contact was hot and humid. The area was heavily overcast and ground visibility severely limited by fog. There had been a heavy rain prior to the contact and a light rain fell twice during the contact.

The enemy was estimated to be possible elements of the 32nd NVA Regiment which made previous contact with the 1st Bn, 8th Inf. The enemy unit that was contacted was the 6th Bn 320th or 32nd NVA Regiment with a total strength between 300 and 500 personnel. The entire battalion participated in the action.

During the contact the enemy launched six ground attacks in an attempt to overrun B and C Companies. Some of these attacks were characterized by enemy armed only with hand grenades. Snipers in trees were employing the B-40 rocket launcher as an anti-personnel weapon with good results and 82mm mortars was employed in its conventional role with minimal effectiveness because of the closeness of contact and geography of the contact area. Some of the enemy ground attacks were repelled with hand to hand combat.

The morale and discipline of the NVA was considered high because they probably believed our troops to be the understrength companies of the 1/8 Inf. They appeared to be well coordinated and disciplined, and well armed. A variety of uniforms was noticed including complete khaki uniform; some khaki trousers and grey shirts; some khaki shorts; some black PJ's; some khaki shirts with black trousers; and some khaki trousers with no shirt and red headgear.

Enemy losses in addition to 96 NVA (BC) are estimated at 75-100 enemy KIA. It is estimated that 100 additional personnel were wounded in the contact. A total of 275 - 300 were wounded or killed in the 6th Bn 32nd Regiment decreasing its combat strength by 60 percent.

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9.(c) Mission: 3/8 Inf to establish FSB vic coord YA 824395 and to conduct search and destroy operations. Assigned AO to locate and destroy enemy forces and installations.

10.(c) Concept of Operations: 3/8 Inf established FSB at YA 824395 on 24 May 1967. Companies B and C airlifted into 1/8 Inf FSB coord YA 789237 and further airlifted from 1/8 Inf FSB to YA 824395 and began Search and Destroy Operations to the east, northeast, moving by bounds from one prominent terrain feature to the next. Co A provided FSB security.

11.(c) Execution:

a. Events prior to the contact starting 251750 May 1967.

251750 May; Instructions for 26 May were issued to B and C Companies. Instructions were for Company C to move from night location vicinity coordinates YA 734308 and to close on B Company night location vicinity coordinates YA 738314; B Company to conduct local patrolling with platoon size elements.

252230 - 260230 May: Company C reported hearing a total of 17 mortar rounds leaving mortar tubes, however, the rounds were not heard detonating. Rounds sounded as if they were being fired from the north of Company C's location vic YA 735311.

b. Actions which took place on the day of contact:

260720 May: Company C departed night location moving to the northwest toward B Company's location (See sketch).

260745 May: Patrols departed from B Company in the following directions: 1st Platoon northwest; 3d Platoon south; 4th Platoon southwest. The Company Commander of B Company left his 2d Platoon at the Company's night location to secure the high ground.

260855 May: Company C reported that it was receiving sporadic sniper fire from the trees. The company, at this time was in a diamond formation with elements in the following order: 2d Platoon leading; 3d Platoon on the west flank; 4th Platoon on the east and the CP centered with 1st Platoon trailing. The Company Commander, Captain Powers was killed in the initial action and Lieutenant Johnson assumed command.

260905 May: Company C reported heavy sniper fire in the area of its 1st and 3rd Platoons. It simultaneously received a heavy ground attack from the west and southwest against the 1st and 3d Platoon elements. The Company Commander then maneuvered the 2d and 4th Platoons to the high ground (location of CP on sketch) to close the company perimeter on the north and northeastern side. While the 2d and 4th Platoons were tightening the company perimeter on the north and northeastern side a second ground attack was launched against that portion of the perimeter being retained by the 1st and 3d Platoons on the south and southeastern sides. At this time the B Company Commander was directed to move his company (less the second Platoon which was to clear a landing zone at the night location) to link up with C Company; he accomplished this by moving the 1st Platoon southwest along the side of the ridge, the 3d Platoon west along the side of the ridge and the 4th Platoon southwest along the top of the ridge (concurrently improving the existing trail).

260915 May: Company C repelled the second ground attack and further tightened the perimeter around its CP location. Heavy sniper and B40 rocket fire continued. The ground attack had been of such ferocity that the company continued to kill NVA who had fallen within the companies lines and were continuing to fight.

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260935 May: Company B and C received a 3rd ground attack from the west and southwest accompanied by intensified B40 rocket and sniper fire. Because the enemy was attacking from lower ground he attempted to place more personnel in trees in order to bring more effective direct fire into the perimeter area. Many NVA therefore, were killed climbing trees. Lieutenant Johnson, the acting C Company Commander was killed during the third ground attack. Command of the company was assumed by 1SGT Childers (who himself was wounded) and other NCO's at the platoon level. The only other officer in the company, Lieutenant Canello, was also seriously wounded during this third attack.

261010 May: The enemy initiated a 4th ground attack from the west and southwest. This attack was repelled and B40 rocket fire temporarily ceased. Enemy location at this time was vicinity YA 730312.

261020 May: A fifth ground attack was launched, again characterized by heavy sniper and B40 fire and contact at distances of 10-15 meters. This attack too, was repelled.

261103 May: Companies B and C received a 6th and final ground attack, launched from vicinity coordinates YA 733310. This attack was repelled at 1115 hours.

261115 May: Gunships were brought in 200 to 400 meters west of YA 735310. Sniper fire decreased to moderately heavy, however B40 fire increased in intensity and 10-15 rounds of 82mm mortar fire were received from the southwest. Companies C and B (-) began moving to B Company's night location. As friendly ground forces withdrew from the contact area they continued to kill NVA who were pulling their dead into the ravine to the north. As the companies began to withdraw, sniper fire again increased in intensity; the battalion commander, therefore directed that B Company cease its withdrawal, cover the withdrawal of C Company, and conduct a limited sweep of the contact area.

261345 May: Battalion Commander entered LZ and assumed direct control of ground forces. Battalion commander ordered B Company to conduct a limited sweep of the contact area and all elements of B and C Companies to close B Company night location for the evening. Instructed the ALO to plan heavy suppressive fires in the area of contact.

261430 May: B Company continued withdrawal to its company night location.

261730 May: Recon Platoon 3/8 Inf began lift into B Company's night location and completed the lift at 1800 hours at which time it became OPCON to Company C.

261745 May: Company B(-) completed sweep of immediate contact area bringing the last of friendly wounded and killed to the LZ. On this initial sweep 92 NVA KIA (BC), in the immediate contact area, were counted. It was noted at this time that all NVA KIA were as a result of small arms fire.

261800 May: Companies B and C secured for the evening and sniper fire terminated.

c. Subsequent action 27 through 28 May 1967: A search of the contact area was planned for first light on 27 May with B Company and Recon Platoon conducting the search. The entire area was searched until 1300 hours. A Company was airlifted into the LZ and C Company and Recon Platoon pulled back to FSB on 27 May. The lift started at 1215 hours and concluded at 1545 hours. An additional 4 bodies were found, 3 killed by artillery and 1 killed by small arms.

On 28 May a complete resupply of A and B Companies was conducted. Another search of the entire area was made.

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12.(c) Results:

a. Enemy losses, 26 May 1967: 96 NVA (KIA)(BC), 2 NVA WIA (POW), 18 AK 47's, 6 BAO, 4 RPDS, and 3 SKS. 65 Chicom grenades, 15 82mm rounds, 1 barrel HMG, 27 canteens w/cover, 29 ponchos, 19 ammo packets, 7 packs, 24 hammocks, 6 helmets, 21 aid packets, 1/2 mile commo wire, 1 FM radio complete w/extra headset, 2500 rounds S/A ammunition and assorted magazines.

b. Friendly losses: 10 KIA (1 B Co and 9 C Co), 69 WIA (8 B Co and 61 C Co), 0 MIA, 3 M-16, 3 45 Cal pistols, 2ea M60 MG, 2ea PRC 25 w/hand set (1 damaged) 18 compasses, 2 pr binoculars, 24 entrenching tools, 26 poncho liners, 29 ponchos, 11 air mattresses, 22 machetes, 26 bayonets and 2ea strobe lights,

13.(c) Administration Matters:

a. Supply: Resupply was initiated on 26 May and was limited to ammunition and water. The 28th of May was full resupply for A and B Companies in the field.

All combat troops carried the following basic load of ammunition: M-16 - 600 rounds, M-60 - 2000 rounds, M-79 - 50 rounds (HE) Shotgun - 100 - 200 rounds.

b. N/A

c. Initial treatment of injured was conducted by organic medics. All WIA were evacuated to Jackson Hole, except for minor injuries, on 26 May 1967 NLT 1700 hours. Evacuation started at 261315 hours.

d. Transportation: N/A

e. Communications: Commo was maintained with the companies through retrans unit. Company C and B both utilized long whip antennas to maintain contact. The FO with Co C maintained comms through relay with the FO Company B at the night location working with a 292 lead wire and mast. During the contact on 26 May communications were supplemented by Command and Control aircraft. Communication was continuous through the operation.

f. Medical evacuation: Of all US WIA only four were considered serious. Fifteen were returned to duty and the remainder were evacuated to higher medical facilities.

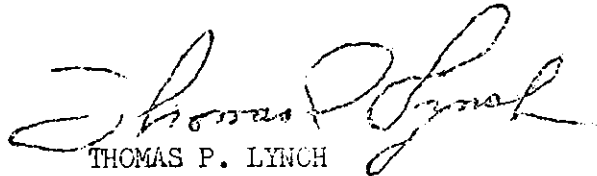
14.(c) Special Equipment: None

15.(c) Commander's analysis: There were no civil affairs conducted, due to lack of civilian populace in the area.

16. Recommendation: See lessons learned.

17. Lessons Learned: See attached Lesson Learned formats. It is felt that old lessons learned were reinforced in several instances.

ACKNOWLEDGE:



THOMAS P. LYNCH  
LTC, Armor  
Commanding

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6 Incl

1. Terrain Sketch - Hill 521
2. Combat Lesson Learned - Safety of Engaged Troops
3. Combat Lesson Learned - Security of the Battle Area
4. Combat Lesson Learned - Weapons Against Snipers in Trees
5. Combat Lesson Learned - Utilization of Artillery in Close Contact Areas
6. Combat Lesson Learned - Movement of Rifle Companies

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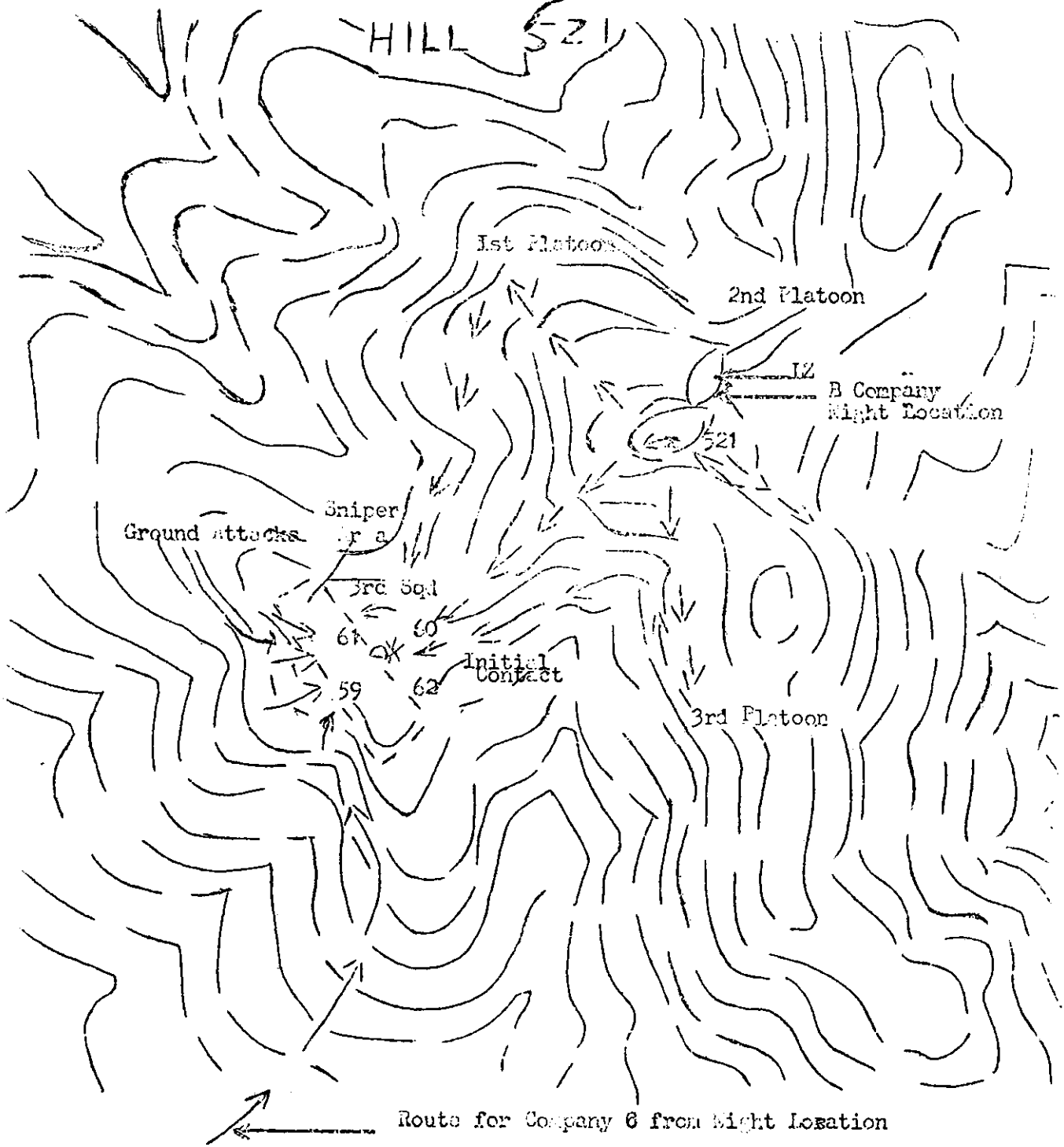
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HILL 521



\* C Company's Night Location

- 59 - 1st Platoon
- 60 - 2nd Platoon
- 61 - 3rd Platoon
- 62 - 4th Platoon

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1. Combat Lesson Learned: ~~Heavy~~ ~~Enemy~~ ~~of~~ ~~Enemy~~ ~~Troops~~.

Item: Moving of elements out of contact area.

Discussion: After the heavy contact was broken, the battalion CO directed that a limited sweep of the contact area be made and that all troops be moved to B Company's night location, in order to prevent further friendly casualties from mortars or further ground attacks.

Observation: It has been observed in past contacts that after a contact, that evening the enemy normally mortared friendly positions.

2. Supporting Facts: (Fill in applicable info)

- a. Source of Information: Battalion Commander 3d Bn 8th Inf
- b. Unit: 3rd Battalion, 8th Infantry
- c. Activity being conducted: Contact with NVA Battalion while on Search and Destroy operation.
- d. Date: 26 May 1967
- e. Location: YA 735311
- f. Weather: Overcast with ground clouds and intermittent rain.
- g. Enemy: Type (NVA or VC): NVA  
Estimated Strength: Battalion  
Disposition: above ground with snipers in the tree tops.
- h. How contact was made: NVA initiated action by sniping at the CP.
- i. Time of initial contact: 0855
- j. Length of time in contact: 2 hours 50 minutes
- k. How contact was broken: NVA broke contact by firing 82mm mortars and B 40's and withdrawing.

l. Summary of event or events from which the Combat Lesson Learned is drawn (Include comments/observations by individuals who witnessed or participated in the event): The Battalion Commander directed that all elements move from the contact area to the high ground. He directed heavy suppressive artillery fire in the area. It should be mentioned that relatively little was policed from the contact area during the night and that the new location was neither mortared nor attempts made to attack it the evening of the 26th or morning of the 27th.

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1. Combat Lesson Learned: Security of Battle Area

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Item: Security of battle area.

Discussion: After the contact was broken, a brief sweep of the contact area was made by Company B. Company B & C then displaced to B Company's night location.

Observation: Even though terrain was only briefly searched, emplacing of heavy artillery suppressing fires prevented the NVA from significantly policing the battle area.

2. Supporting Facts: (Fill in applicable info):

- a. Source of Information: Battalion Commander, 3d Bn, 8th Inf
- b. Unit: 3rd Battalion, 8th Infantry
- c. Activity being conducted: On Search and Destroy, after a major contact, withdrawing elements to high ground.
- d. Date: 26 May 1967
- e. Location: YA 738314
- f. Weather: Overcast, low clouds and intermittent rain showers.
- g. Enemy: Type (NVA or VC): NVA  
Estimated strength: Battalion  
Disposition: Above ground with snipers in trees
- h. How contact was made: Contact was made by C 3/8 Inf as they were conducting Search and Destroy. NVA snipers initiated fires.
- i. Time of initial contact: 0855
- j. Length of time in contact: 2 hours and 50 minutes
- k. How contact was broken: Contact was broken by the NVA firing mortars or B 40 rounds and withdrawing.

1. Summary of event or events from which the Combat Lesson Learned is drawn (Include comments/observations by individuals who witnessed or participated in the event): After contact was broken by the NVA the Battalion Commander directed a limited sweep of the contact area and moved the 2 companies onto high ground (B Co night location) and completely cleared the contact area of friendly forces. Friendly wounded and dead were evacuated, however, NVA dead and equipment were left in place. During the night heavy concentrations of suppressive fires were planned for the area, and continued until friendly elements began sweep of contact area on the following morning. During search of area, 96 NVA bodies were found, 2 WIA NVA, and 32 weapons were located in the morning. The Battalion Commander felt that moving the troops in contact to a new location prevented more casualties and the artillery preserved the battle area.

Inclosure 3

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1. Combat Lesson Learned: Weapons against snipers in trees.

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Item: Use of the M79 (Grenade launcher) Shotgun and M60 MG against snipers.

Discussion: During the contact Company C and Company B faced numerous NVA snipers located in tops of the high trees in the area.

Observation: It was observed that the M79 GL, shotgun and the M60 MG was most effective against the snipers in the trees. This was accomplished by firing M79 and shotguns direct fire and the M60 MG by spraying the tree tops.

2. Supporting Facts: (Fill in applicable info)

- a. Source of Information: Battalion Commander, 3d Bn, 8th Inf
- b. Unit: Companies C and B, 3d Bn, 8th Inf
- c. Activity being conducted: Contact with estimated NVA Battalion while on S&D mission.
- d. Date: 26 May 67
- e. Location: YA 735311
- f. Weather: Overcast with ground clouds and intermittent rain.
- g. Enemy: Type (NVA or VC): NVA  
Estimated strength: Battalion  
Disposition: Above ground with snipers in the high trees.
- h. How contact was made: NVA initiated contact by sniping at CP plus initiating a ground attack.
- i. Time of initial contact: 0855 hours
- j. Length of time in contact: 2 hours and 50 minutes
- k. How contact was broken: NVA broke contact by firing mortars and B40 rockets while withdrawing.

l. Summary of event or events from which the Combat Lesson Learned is drawn (Include comments/observations by individuals who witnessed or participated in the event): It was found that because the snipers were located above the friendly forces the M67 LAW was not capable of firing into the trees. The M16 was effective; however, due to ground attacks and positions M16s were used mainly against ground forces. The M79, shotgun, and M60 MG were said to be most effective because of explosion effect of M79, shotgun of the shotgun and the spray effect of the MG.

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L. Combat Lesson Learned: Utilization of artillery in close contact areas.

Item: Use of artillery to seal off areas of close contact.

Discussion: During close contact with enemy forces (within 10-15 meters of friendly elements) or when enemy snipers are in trees, it is necessary to seal off the contact area with artillery fire.

Observation: Because of the enemy disposition it is not possible to place close-in fires on the enemy. Therefore to prevent reinforcement or escape the contact area should be sealed off with artillery fire.

2. Supporting Facts: (Fill in applicable info):

- a. Source of Information: Bn CO, 3d Bn, 8th Inf, ALO 3d Bn, 8th Inf
- b. Unit: 3d Bn, 8th Inf
- c. Activity being conducted: S&D
- d. Date: 26 May 67
- e. Location: YA 735311
- f. Weather: Overcast, low ground clouds and intermittent rain
- g. Enemy: Type (NVA or VC): NVA  
Estimated strength: Battalion  
Disposition: Above ground in formation and in trees
- h. How contact was made: NVA initiated action with sniper fire
- i. Time of initial contact: 0855
- j. Length of time in contact: 2 hours and 50 minutes
- k. How contact was broken: NVA broke contact by firing mortars and B40 rockets while withdrawing.

1. Summary of event or events from which Combat Lesson Learned is drawn (Include comments/observations by individuals who witnessed or participated in the event): The close proximity of enemy forces to friendly forces precluded placing artillery fires directly on the enemy. Therefore, fires were placed all around the contact area to preclude reinforcement and hamper withdrawal of the enemy.

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1. Combat Lesson Learned: Movement of Rifle Companies

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Item: Moving of Rifle Companies by bounds

Discussion: Prior to the contact on the 26th the rifle companies had been moving by bounds, one company on commanding terrain (stationary) and the other company moving to a new key terrain feature

Observation: During the contact the method stated above proved a saving feature because, B Company held the critical terrain and Company C was moving on the highest terrain available.

2. Supporting Facts: (Fill in applicable info)

a. Source of Information: Battalion Commander 3/8 Inf

b. Unit: 3rd Battalion 8th Infantry

c. Activity being conducted: Companies B and C were in contact with an NVA Battalion

d. Date: 26 May 1967

e. Location: YA 735304

f. Weather: Overcast, with ground clouds and intermittent rain.

g. Enemy: Type (NVA or VC): NVA  
Estimated Strength: Battalion  
Disposition: Above ground and snipers in heavy foliage in top of trees.

h. How contact was made: NVA initiated contact by placing sniper fire on the CP group.

i. Time of initial contact: 0855

j. Length of time in contact: 2 hours and 50 minutes

k. How contact was broken: NVA fired 82mm mortars and M40 rockets and began withdrawal.

l. Summary of event or events from which the Combat Lesson Learned is drawn (Include commends/observations by individuals who witnessed or participated in the event):

The Battalion Commander, due to intelligence in the contact area and prior experience, decided at all times to command key terrain. The system is to move one rifle company while the other rifle company remains stationary, maintaining commo with 292 mast and cable on commanding terrain. The maneuvering company moves to a key terrain feature within 2-3 hours of the stationary company's location. When the maneuvering company is established on key terrain, the stationary company begins to move.

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