

MENTIONS A 1/30

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
HEADQUARTERS, 2D BATTALION (AIRBORNE) 19TH ARTILLERY  
APO San Francisco 96490

AVDAAR-A

1 APRIL 1970

2 June 1970

SUBJECT: After Action Report - Fire Support Base Illingworth

Commanding Officer  
1st Cavalry Division Artillery (AV)  
ATTN: S3  
APO 96490

I. GENERAL

At approximately 010215 April 1970 FSB Illingworth was attacked by elements of the 272 NVA Regiment. An intense indirect fire attack was followed by a determined ground assault. A highly coordinated infantry-artillery defense, culminating in hand to hand fighting on the barn, repulsed the attack by 0500. No penetration of the position was made and 88 NVA dead were found in the area, along with numerous ~~of~~ <sup>of</sup> severed and individual weapons and a quantity of miscellaneous equipment.

II. BACKGROUND

FSB Illingworth had been occupied by the 2d Battalion, 8th Cavalry to support their operations in the Dog's Head. Captured documents indicated the probability of the 950 NVA Regiment basecamp being in that area. The following units were either at Illingworth or in support.

| <u>ORGANIC</u>          | <u>LOCATION</u>    |
|-------------------------|--------------------|
| HHC-S, 2-19 Arty        | Tay Ninh Base Camp |
| B/2-19 Arty (105)       | FSB Hennes         |
| <u>SECOR</u>            | <u>LOCATION</u>    |
| B/4-77 Arty (105)       | FSB Illingworth    |
| <u>GENERAL SUPPORT</u>  | <u>LOCATION</u>    |
| B/2-42 Arty (155)       | FSB Hennes         |
| A/1-30 Arty (-) (3X155) | FSB Illingworth    |

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GENERAL SUPPORT

LOCATION

|                            |                    |
|----------------------------|--------------------|
| How Dtry 1-11 AGR (155SP)  | Camp Hazard        |
| A/2-32 Arty (*) (2X8")     | FSB Illingworth    |
| B/2-32 Arty (*) (2X8")     | Camp Hazard        |
| B/2-32 Arty (2X175)        | FSB St. Barbara    |
| A/2-20 Arty (ARA)          | Tay Ninh Base Camp |
| B/5-2 Arty (*) (1Quad .50) | FSB Illingworth    |

Base defense was provided by the Battalion Hqs, and Companies C and E 2-8 Cav. Company B was in the Bien Hoa VIP center. Company A was OPCON to the 1-11 AGR and Company D was OPCON to the 5-7 Cav at Phuoc Vinh. On the night of the attack there were no units of 2-8 Cav operating in the unit area of operations.

Located at the FSB were 6X105 (B/1-77 Arty), 3X155 (A/1-30 Arty), 2X8" (A/2-32 Arty), 1 Quad .50 (B/5-2 Arty) and one IIPVY 23" Xenon searchlight. The 2X8" howitzers had been moved by direction of IIPVY Arty from Thien Ngan to Illingworth to obtain better physical security.

Heavy contacts had occurred on several occasions since mid-March, all to the north and northwest of the FSB. The 1-11 AGR operations along the northern neck of the Dog's Head resulted in several contacts. The most recent of these was on the afternoon of 31 March, when 32 NVA were killed and 16 NVA captured. Intelligence reports indicated enemy units were in the Dog's Head area and a heavy volume of artillery fire was being placed on suspect locations. To the south, on 29 March, FSB Jay had repulsed a heavy attack from a battalion sized element of the 272 NVA Regiment.

Evidence of enemy movement in the immediate area of Illingworth was provided by 14 FSB-5 radar sightings from 18-31 March. Four of these occurred between 2000 - 0056 hours the night of the attack. The sightings alerted the defenders to a possible enemy threat and specific measures were taken. The infantry units increased the frequency of their "Mad Minutes" and relocated crew - served weapons. The 2-19 Arty in FDC initiated "exercise" firing of the prearranged FSB fire plan using all supporting artillery. A section of AAA conducted firing runs around the base just after midnight. Thus, when the attack began, defensive preparations were at a high state of readiness. Artillery targets on the FSB fire plan had all been fired at least once between 2000 and 0215 hours.

B 1/77  
B 2/19  
A 2/32  
A 1/30

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III. THE ATTACK

At approximately 0215 an intense barrage by 107mm, 122mm and 240mm rockets, 82mm and 120mm mortars and 75mm recoilless rifle fire struck the FSB. This phase continued for a short period of time (estimated 15-30 minutes) and comprised some 300 or more rounds. Several 107mm rockets, employed in short-range direct fire, were heard passing over the FSB. These were apparently intended to destroy the several RC-292 radio antennas in the base. This was followed by a ground attack from the southwest by an estimated two reinforced companies. Automatic weapons, RPG and mortar fire continued to pour into the FSB from three sides. At one point the enemy reached the berm in the 8" battery area and were repulsed after savage hand to hand fighting. During this phase all 105 and 155 artillery returned direct fire at enemy tree line positions, ignoring the heavy B-40 and mortar fire impacting in their area. The B/1-77 FDC received several hits, destroying all radio link except for one short whip PRC-77 to the B/2-19 FDC at FSB Hammas. The other link was from the artillery liaison officer at Illingworth to an ARA section overhead. For a period of approximately one-half hour, supporting artillery was controlled by the 2-19 Arty Bn FDC through the ARA section leader. One 105 was knocked out by enemy fire; the remainder kept up a continuous volume of heavy fire, with one gun firing self-illumination. The quad .50 gunner was then wounded and the gun damaged by a grenade. One of the 8" powder storage bunkers began burning and the heat and exploding munitions drove the defenders away from that section of the berm. Shortly thereafter the other 8" bunker, containing some 190 rounds, apparently struck by enemy fire, detonated with a tremendous blast, blowing a 20' deep crater and knocking both 8" howitzers and the FDC out of action. Nearly every defender was knocked flat and many were burned and deafened. All indirect fire control equipment (collimators, aiming circles, aiming stakes) in the 105 area were blown away and the guns partially buried. The blast was followed by a complete lull of 5-10 minutes in which every one, friendly and enemy, attempted to recover from the stunning force of the explosion. An unknown number of casualties were caused by it. Also, a vast, impenetrable pall of choking dust covered the base, blinding the defenders and jamming weapons.

The individual initiative of many of the infantry and artillerymen brought the defense back to life. The infantry commanders rushed reinforcements to the southwest corner and defensive fire resumed. One of the 105 guns was out of action due to casualties; the B Battery Commander, assisted by several infantrymen placed the gun back into action.

The 8" ammunition had not been stored underground, as required, and its detonation caused a significant portion of total casualties and damage, including blowing away the southwest portion of the berm. During the entire

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attack, supporting artillery continuously pounded enemy forces and positions. Fire from B/2-19 Arty and AAA raked the enemy attack route from the southwest and enemy bases of fire in the tree lines were struck by medium artillery. The 2-19 Arty Co-1 platoon at Thien Ngan located several enemy mortar positions which were engaged by medium and heavy artillery and the two CIG 105s at Thien Ngan. The artillery liaison officer at Illingworth effectively controlled tube and AAA fires. ARA observed and engaged 1 57 AA position and 1 82mm mortar position, destroying both and killing 7 NVA. Air Force flareships and 2 Shadows were on station, but tactical air was not available until 0430.

Total expenditures in defensive and followup pursuit fires were:

105mm - 2039

155mm - 1046

1" - 157

115mm - 150

AAA - 11 sections

Ten Air - 2 sections

Shadow - 2 sections

US losses were:

24 KIA (B/1-77, <sup>6</sup>6; A/2-32, <sup>3</sup>3)

54 WIA (B/1-77, <sup>16</sup>16; A/2-32, <sup>5</sup>5) A/1-30, <sup>2</sup>2)

1 x 105 howitzer

1 x 8" howitzer

1 x 23" searchlight

1 x 3/4 ton truck

2 x M548 ammo carriers

Twenty one of the 80 enemy KIA were credited to artillery fire.

IV. FOLLOW UP

Throughout the day artillery continued pursuit fire on enemy withdrawal

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Observed fires were adjusted by A/1-9 Cav and 1st Bde Scout helicopters. Resupply and medevac aircraft flew in and out on pre-planned air corridors which allowed continuous safe artillery firing. A pre-dawn reinforcement of D/1-11 ACR from Camp Bastard was given a safe corridor into the FSB by artillery fire on the north and south flanks and overhead illumination.

The successful defense was greatly aided by early warning, prompt response to an effective pre-arranged artillery fire plan, and the bravery and close coordination and cooperation of the infantry and artillerymen on the FSB.

THOMAS E. FITZGERALD  
LTC, FA  
Commanding