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The Vietnam Combat Database

Example of an original contact report

CONFIDENTIAL

ENCLOSURE A TO
2 RAN COMBAT OPS
AFTER ACTION REPORT

CONTACT AFTER ACTION REPORT OF KEERRA

Part 1

1. Report by No 36520 Sgt D.H. JUDELL, 8 RAR, A Coy, 3 Pl.
2. Date/Time of contact was 271547H, at grid location of YS345637
3. Duration of (i) Firefight: 10 mins, for a total of 10 mins.
4. Description of contact, including task and events prior to contact and friendly/enemy reaction. Include sketch.

The task was to do a re-escort of the western side of the re-entrant at the above grid reference. We discovered bunker-signs and shook out in extended line from the top of the ridge to the creek. The enemy initiated the contact with 2-3 Claymores and 1 RPG. Followed by long bursts of 2-5 AK47s. The section 2IC was only four feet from the claymore, which was badly sighted.
5. Description of the terrain and canopy, including estimated ranges of visibility.

Steep and rocky with a poor visibility of 5-7 metres.
6. Who was the first to see the enemy (names not required; insert fwd scout, H3 No 1, etc as applicable.) — The fwd scout.
7. Distance to the enemy when first sighted was 20 metres.

Example of a database record
The ‘big battles’ (or ‘landmark’ battles)

- Battle of Long Tan: 18 Aug 66
- Operation Bribie: 17 Feb 67
- Battles of Tet ‘68: Baria, Long Dien
- Battles of FSB Coral
- Battles of FSB Balmoral
- Battle of Binh Ba: 6-7 June 69
- Battle of Nui Le: 21 Sep 71
Characteristics of the ‘big battles’

- All are initiated by the People’s Army
- Light infantry versus ‘Combined Arms Team’
- Large People’s Army casualties
- Strong tendency to ‘stay and fight’
- Few in number
- Strong tendency towards ‘luring the tiger from the jungle’
- Planned over a long period
- Strong tendency towards achieving surprise
- All seek a political as well as military result
Characteristics of the ‘little battles’ (contacts)

• Overwhelmingly initiated by 1ATF
• Short range and short duration
• Overwhelmingly light infantry against light infantry
• Small numbers of troops involved
• Overwhelmingly the PAVN prefer to avoid these battles and they seek to break contact
• Two-thirds are ambushes or patrol encounters
• Either neutral or negative political value to the enemy
• Very large numbers of contacts (approx 3900)
## U.S. forces and 1ATF compared

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of contact</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>U.S. Army</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ambush (by enemy)</td>
<td>23.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ambush (of enemy)</td>
<td>8.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attack on enemy position</td>
<td>17.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Defence of position</td>
<td>30.4</td>
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<td>‘Hot’ landing zone</td>
<td>12.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Patrol Encounter</td>
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1ATF Contacts and Associated Casualties (minus General and Urban Engagements and Mine Incidents) 1966-1971

No of Contacts and Casualties

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<tr>
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<td>129</td>
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<td>149</td>
<td>111</td>
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<tr>
<td>En Cas</td>
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<td>121</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>113</td>
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<td>100</td>
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<td>8</td>
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### 1ATF average shots per casualty by combat task and weapon type

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Weapon type</th>
<th>Combat task</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Patrol encounter</td>
<td>Ambush (of enemy)</td>
<td>Bunker system attack</td>
<td>Security or defence of position</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.62mm GPMG M60</td>
<td>619</td>
<td>495</td>
<td>1310</td>
<td>761</td>
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<td>5.56mm M16</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>679</td>
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<td>7.62mm SLR</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>517</td>
<td>174</td>
<td></td>
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Ambushes

- 2% of 1ATF contacts were enemy ambushes of 1ATF
- 34% were 1ATF ambushes of the enemy
- 79% of 1ATF ambushes were against 6 enemy or less
- 50% were at 10 m range or less
- 1ATF infantry loss ratio = 1:10
- Enemy loss ration = 1:2.7
1ATF Ambushes of the Enemy

- Ambush
- Mangroves
- Phuoc Tuy Border

20:01 - 21:00
1ATF Ambushes of the Enemy

- Ambush
- Mangroves
- Phuoc Tuy Border

1:01 - 2:00
1ATF Ambushes of the Enemy

- Ambush
- Mangroves
- Phuoc Tuy Border

Time period: 3:01 - 4:00
1ATF Ambushes of the Enemy

- Ambush
- Mangroves
- Phuoc Tuy Border

Map showing the distribution of ambushed areas.
Results of the ambush battle

• Exploited enemy vulnerabilities –
  Requirement to resupply from villages
  Requirement to communicate between base areas

• Reduced ability to resupply and eventually forced large enemy units out of the Province

• Helped to ‘paralyse’ enemy forces and keep them off balance

• This led to reduced ability to interfere with pacification and social, political and economic development in the villages.
Where to from here?

- Add non-combat data to the database
- Add non-1ATF data to the database
- Analyse 1ATF combat and non-combat activity in the context of the whole struggle in Phuoc Tuy Province
- Add a Wiki component
- Put everything on the web