

## Battle of Hoa Tan, 6 March 1967

In Memory of these Cacti Brothers...

B Co. 1/35th - 6 March 1967 - Sp4 Stephen Peck, SSG William Poole, Pfc. Harry Taylor

A Btry 2/9th Arty - 6 Mar 1967 - Pfc Lynn Ferguson

C Troop, 1/9th Cav - 6 Mar 1967 - Jesus Gonzales, Edward Kaneshiro (DSC), Jimmie Martin

### a. Unit involved:

Blue Team, 1/9 Cavalry

Co A, 2/5 Cavalry

Co A, 1/35 Infantry

Co B, 1/35 Infantry

Co C, 1/35 Infantry

Co B, 2/5 Cavalry

Btry A, 2/9 Artillery (DS - 1/35 Infantry)

b. Mission: The mission of all units initially was search and destroy or security. C Troop, 1/9 Cavalry was the support of the 3d Brigade TF, 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. Co A 2/5 Cavalry was the security company at LZ UPLIFT. Co A and Co B, 1/35 Infantry were conducting a village search of Chua Trieu - Son (BR857943). Co C, 1/35th Infantry as OPCON to 1/14th Infantry and conducting an operation in the Upper Suoi Ca Valley region. Co B, 2/5 Cavalry was located at LZ ENGLISH. A Btry, 2/9 Arty was DS 1/35th Infantry at LZ UPLIFT.

c. Terrain: The area of contact is characterized by flat rice paddies with palm groves and hedgerows around the villages. The village of Hoa Tan is surrounded by rice paddies, and further to the north, west, and south by low hills.

d. Enemy: No enemy forces were known to be in the contact area on 6 March 1967. No previous contacts had been made in the Hoa Tan area.



### e. Synopsis of action:

(1) At approximately 0720 hours, 6 March 1967, a gunship, C Troop, 1/9 Cavalry spotted a military age male standing near a bunker vic (BR972879). The gunship landed to apprehend the VCS, received fire, and was forced to land on a sandbar at BR980880.

(2) The Blue Team, C/1/9 Cavalry was inserted at approximately 0735 hours to develop the situation in the area of contact. The platoon became heavily engaged with enemy in bunkers vic BR972879. (0830 - 0900 hrs)

(3) One platoon, Co A, 2/5 Cavalry as airlifted to a blocking

position on the hill vic BR970880 and touched down at 1030 hours. On landing, the platoon received automatic weapons fire and suffered one WIA. The platoon was OPCON to C 1/9 Cavalry.

(4) Co A, 2/5 Cavalry as alerted to send the rest of the company to the contact area at 1045 hours. The CO, 1/35 Infantry as alerted to move Co A and Co B, 1/35th Infantry from their village search operation to encircle the Hoa Tan area and was directed to assume control of the area.

(5) Co A, 2/5 Cavalry completed its move to the blocking position by approximately 1130 hours. The Blue Team maintained sporadic contact throughout this period and several gunship strikes were called on the bunker positions in an attempt to neutralize the enemy.

(6) By 1130 hours, Co A and Co B, 1/35th Infantry were moving northeast (by foot) to the contact area. Co A sent one platoon by ground to secure LZ ANCHOR. (BR942853) so that A battery, 2/9 Arty could be displaced from LZ UPLIFT. The contact area was at maximum range for the 155 Arty Battery at LZ UPLIFT.

(7) Co B, 1/35th Infantry moved astride the road to a position vic BR967875, arriving at that location at 1300 hours. At that point, the company split into two columns with the 1st and 3d platoons maneuvering to the southeast, then north, into the area of contact of the Blue Team. The Company, minus, consisting of the 2nd and 4th platoons, proceeded towards the town of Hoa Tan.

(8) Co A, minus the platoon at LZ ANCHOR, moved through the saddle at BR952878 to occupy blocking positions north and west of Hoa Tan along the high ground. The company's move would, in effect, seal off the area, since Co A, 2/5 Cavalry had blocked to the north.

(9) The CO, 1/35th Infantry assumed control of all forces in the area at approximately 1330 hours upon the completion of an air strike being conducted by CO, 1/9 Cavalry. The Blue Team was extracted and placed on standby.

(10) As elements of Co B, 1/35th Infantry advanced along the finger at BR974876, they came under heavy automatic weapons fire at approximately 1400 hours. Gunships were used in support.

(11) Co B (-) approached the town of Hoa Tan on two axes and initiated contact with enemy occupying bunkers, and spider holes, and trenches. To the east on the finger, the 1st and 3d platoons withdrew a short distance to call for additional gunship support from C/1/9 Cavalry.

(12) As the afternoon progressed, the action of the 1st and 3d platoons continued to be characterized by sporadic contact. The Company (-) became more heavily engaged within the village of Hoa Tan. The enemy positions were well concealed and constructed. The enemy allowed some elements to pass and then came up from spider holes to fire on US Troops from the rear.

(13) By 1600 hours the blocking force of Co A was in position and the 105 Battery (A/2/9) had closed LZ ANCHOR. The use of artillery at that time, however, was not feasible in the contact area. Blocking fires were used to the north of Co A, 1/35<sup>th</sup> Infantry position. Gunships from C Troop, 1/9 Cavalry and the 119th Avn Co were used to fly close support to Co B, 1/35th Infantry.

(14) At 1545 hours, Co C, 1/35th Infantry was airlifted into LZ's vic BR977930 and moved south to blocking positions along the ridge from BR960920 southeast to BR977907. The company closed at dusk.

(15) Co B, 2/5 Cavalry was airlifted into blocking positions vic BR958900. The Blue Team was inserted at BR971900. These two units were placed OPCON to 1/35th Infantry on touchdown and were given blocking missions.

(16) At 1630 Hours, the B Company Commander, 1/35th Infantry was wounded and subsequently evacuated by the Battalion CO. The company was still engaged at close quarters in the fortified village and the use of supporting fires was hampered by the proximity of the friendly troops and blocking forces. Accordingly, B Co minus withdrew to positions along the road east of the village so that additional casualties could be evacuated and ammo resupply could be effected. The 1st and 3d platoons also withdrew 100 meters south for the same reason.

(17) Contact was broken at approximately 1900 hours. Co B was ordered to blocking positions - one at BR976876, the other at BR975875. At this point, A Battery, 2/9 Artillery began an intensive program to neutralize the fortified village and block escape routes.

(18) Throughout the night of 6-7 March Artillery was fired. At 0800 on 7 March, after six - battery volleys, B Co 1/35th Infantry attacked along the same axes and met only light resistance. Co A, 1/35th Infantry moved to the low ground just west of the village to afford better support. Co B, 1/35th Infantry cleared the town and began to police the battlefield.

**f. Results:**

(1) Enemy losses: 84 NVA KIA, 3 LMG, 1 RPG 2, 1 RPD, 1 M-79, 6 SKS, 3 AK-47's, 4 M-16, 1 US Carbine, 3 57mm RR Rounds, 7 60mm mortar rounds, 1 flare pistol, 28 grenades, misc packs, documents, and ammunition.

(2) Documents recovered indicate the enemy unit was the 9th Battalion, 18th NVA Regiment. It is believed at least two enemy companies were involved in the battle.

**(3) US Losses:**

Co B, 1/35th Infantry - 3 KHA, 10 WHA  
A Btry 2/9 Arty - 1 KHA  
C Troop, 1/9 Cavalry -1 KHA, 5 WHA  
A Co, 2/5 Cavalry - 3 WHA

**g. Comments:**

This battle is typical of actions in fortified villages. Both the Blue Team and Co B, 1/35th Infantry were engaged in close quarters. The battle area was encircled to prevent escape. In this action, however, the company withdrew periodically to utilize gunship and air support. Artillery, when available after the displacement, was employed to the maximum extent possible to "soften" up the village. By chance, Co B, 1/35th Infantry was wearing armored vests on 6 March, a fact which saved at least five lives. This is a good example of the "hammer and anvil" techniques.