

Operation Putnam Paragon

21 May to 28 June, 1970

IN MEMORY OF THESE FINE YOUNG MEN.

6/4/70 B Co. Sp4 Robert Guinn Age 20 Lincoln Park, Michigan Small Arms/AW

6/5/70 B Co. Sp4 Herbert Horner Age 18 Kingsport, Tennessee Booby Trap

6/12/70 C Co. Sp4 Stanley Ciesielski Age 20 New Britain, Connecticut Small Arms/AW

This Report provided by Richard Cazeault, D/2-35, 1970

HEADQUARTERS, 2D BATTALION 35TH INFANTRY

APO San Francisco 96262

7 July 1970

SUBJECT: Combat After action Report

Commanding Officer

2d Brigade, 4th Inf Div

ATTN: S3

APO San Francisco 96262

1. Name of operation: PUTNAM PARAGON

2. Dates of Operation: 21 May – 28 June

3. Location: The general location of the operation was 24 kilometers NNW of CAMP RADCLIFF, RVN, west of the SONG BA RIVER VALLEY.

4. Control Headquarters:

a. 2D Brigade, 4th Infantry Division located at CAMP RADCLIFF.

b. 2-35TH Inf Forward Command Post located at LZ WARRIOR (21 May - 31 May); LZ LANCE (31 May – 18 June); LZ WELCH (18 June - 28 June)

5. Key Personnel:

POSITION	NAME	DATE
BN CO	LTC WILLIAMS L HARRISON, JR.	21 May – 28 Jun
BN XO	MAJ WILLIAM J HARDENBURGH	21 May – 28 Jun
BN S1	1LT ROBERT P BOSKING	21 May – 28 Jun

BN S2	CPT KIRK W LARSEN	21 May – 28 Jun
BN S3	MAJ EVERETT R THOMAS	21 May – 28 Jun
BN S3 AIR	1LT PHILLIP R RUSS	21 May – 11 Jun
BN S4	CPT BURL D MAGEE	21 May – 28 Jun
BN SPT PLT LDR	1LT MICHAEL D MACMANN	21 May – 8 Jun
BN SPT PLT LDR	1LT RICHARD A WETHERELL	8 Jun – 28 Jun
A CO	CPT JERRY S CLARK	21 May – 28 Jun
B CO	CPT BERT L JACOBS	21 May – 28 Jun
C CO	1LT RALPH W JAMES	21 May – 28 Jun
D CO	CPT DAVID B O'BRIEN	21 May – 2 Jun
D CO	1LT MARSHALL W ERICKSON	2 Jun – 28 Jun
E CO	CPT EMILLIO GUTERREZ	21 May – 28 Jun
RECON PLT LDR	1LT THOMAS M WAJER	21 May – 28 Jun
4.2 MORT PLT LDR	2LT WILLIS M MUSKA	21 May – 28 Jun
A/4-42 ARTY CO	CPT PAUL STEWART	21 May – 28 Jun
A/4-42 ARTY LO	CPT GORDON CAMERON-STUART	21 May – 28 Jun

6. Task Organization:

A Co 2-35 Inf	BN CON
B Co 2-35 Inf (opcon 1-12 20) Jun-23 Jun)	RECON PLT 2-35 Inf
C Co 2-35 Inf	4.2 MORTAR PLT 2-35 Inf
D Co 2-35 Inf	A/4-42 ARTY (DS) SQD/C/4th ENGR (DS)

7. Supporting Forces:

a. Supporting artillery to include TIC, Night Fire, Quick Reaction Fire, and Defensive Targets, were provided by A/4-42 Arty in direct support of 2/35 Inf.

b. Gunship support was provided on a mission request basis by 2d Brigade, 4th Inf Div, located at CAMP RADCLIFF.

c. Tactical Air Support was available on a preplanned and/or immediate request basis through 2d BDE, 4th Inf Div. Numerous preplanned requests were submitted by and five were flown in support of this Battalion.

d. SNOOPY/SCORPION missions were available on a preplanned basis through 2d BDE, 4th Inf Div. Numerous SNOOPY/SCORPION missions were flown for this battalion, however, none led to any significant findings by ground troops.

8. Intelligence:

a. Terrain: The terrain to the northwest of AN KHE is composed largely of very mountainous, rugged steep inclines, tapering off to moderate valleys and gentle lowlands. There are many secondary streams both intermittent and larger tributaries. In the northern portion of our AO the SONG BA RIVER makes its path down the main valley floor. The vegetation is thick, with occasional areas of bamboo thickets. Although there was dense undergrowth and much triple canopy jungle, there were areas where cleared areas and cultivated fields were quite common

b. Weather: During the period we experienced the effects from the southwest monsoon. Afternoon rain showers were prevalent and evening thunder showers were prominent for the period. There were times when, due to the low cloud cover, it became impossible to fly in the AO. The temperature averaged 85°F during the majority of the operation.

c. Enemy Situation: The area 12-15 kilometers northwest of AN KHE was expected to produce elements of the C2 Sapper Co. Although several contacts were made, there was no real evidence that the unit was actually operating in the area during our tenure there. We did, however, manage to find several small caches of food stuffs.

Further to the north, 20 kilometers, we expected to find members of the GIA LAI Provincial Unit. There were numerous contacts where the VC/NVA appeared to have very stealthily observed our movements and then capitalized on our mistakes. The enemy force appeared to be native, possibly VMC., who knew the trails and areas very thoroughly. Although several caches, to include one containing 2-3 tons of rice, and one containing 47 82mm mortar rounds complete with fuses, were found, there were never indications that more than a few enemy were in the area. Numerous bunkers and hootches in a deteriorated condition were found, to indicate use in the past. The area was also infested with punji stakes, most of which were old.

9. Mission: 2-35 Inf conducted aggressive search and destroy operations in AO Buick with OBJ DUMBO and high ground vic LZ WARRIOR as two initial objectives to destroy elements of C2 Co, 401st Sapper Bn.

On 30 May, 2-35 Inf conducted aggressive search and destroy operations in AO PORSCHE to destroy members of the GIA LAI Provincial Unit.

On 18 Jun, 2-35 Inf moved into AO SCHULTZ to locate and destroy 3d NVA Div HQ and rear service elements, locate and destroy enemy supply bases, and interdict enemy infiltration and supply routes.

10. Concept of Operations The operation was conducted in four phases:

a. Phase I: B Co conducted a CA into LZ WARRIOR, and scoured LZ for construction of FSB; A, C, D Co's and Rcn Plt conducted CA's into LZ's CUB, YANKEE, BREWER, and SENATOR respectively. (Annex A)

b. Phase II: A, C, D Co's and Rcn Plt conducted aggressive search and destroy operations in AO's SILK, LINEN, COTTON and RAYON, respectively. (Annex A)

c. Phase III: On 30 May, C Co conducted a CA and moved overland to OBJ DASH and secured it for construction of FSB LANCE; on 31 May, A, B, D Co 's, Rcn Plt and TAC CP conducted CA's into AO PORSCHE and continued search and destroy operations in that AO. (.Annex B)

d. Phase IV: on 18 Jun, A Co conducted a CA. into LZ WELCH and secured it for the subsequent construction of FSB; B, C Co and Rcn Pit conducted CA 's into new AO's and continued search and destroy operations. (Annex C)

11. Execution: On 21 May 70, 2-35 Inf began OPERATION PUTNAM PARAGON by establishing the battalion CP at FSB WARRIOR (BR 323 558).

a. A Company: On 21 May 70, at 1425H, A Co completed a CA from CAMP RADCLIFF into LZ vic BR 273 578 and began search and destroy operations in their assigned AO. A Co had no contacts and made no significant finds while working in AO SILK. On 311031H May 70, A Co completed a CA from PZ vic BR 286 614 to LZ vic BR 285 694. Upon reaching the LZ, 2/A sent a sweep north and located 1 hootch, vic BR 286 692, containing 47 82mm rounds. On 041625H Jun 70, vic BR 281 687, 2/A found a village consisting of 11 hootches and 8 bunkers. Also found were 11 graves. The graves were dug up but the bodies are too badly discomposed to determine the cause of death. The graves were estimated to be 6 mo. to 1 yr. old. On 051250H Jun 70, vic BR 294 706, 1/A found 1 hootch containing 2-3 tons of rice, placed in the hootch within the last 3 days. The rice was evacuated to S2, 2d BDE. On 18 Jun 70, A Co completed a CA from PZ vic BR 262 792 to LZ WELCH to secure it for the construction of the FSB. On CA 'ing from the PZ, 3/A received 5-7 rounds of AK-47 ground to air fire from SEL BR 260 792. The helicopter took 2 or 3 hits in its fuel tanks as gunships expended on the SEL.

b. B Company: On 24 May 70, B Co(-) moved overland from FSB WARRIOR into their ambush AO's. 1/B continued the security mission at CAMP RADCLIFF. B Co conducted extensive search and destroy operations, however, none led to significant findings while working in AO BUICK. On 311218H May 70, B Co(-) conducted a CA from PZ vic BR 335581 to LZ vic BR 264729. 1/B rejoined B Co(-) at this time. The company moved into its ambush AO to begin search and destroy operations in AO PORSCHE. On 031606H Jun 70, 1/B, while conducting a sweep from LZ vic BR 263722, received 2-3 rounds of small arms fire from an undetermined number of enemy. Small arms fire was returned, however, a sweep of the area revealed negative findings. Results of the contact were 1 friendly WIA and unknown enemy casualties. On 040913H Jun 70, 2/B, while sweeping LZ vic BR 263722, set off a grenade type booby trap wounding 3. At 1142H, vic BR 263738, an OP on LZ security for 1/B heard movement 50 meters to the NE. OP initiated fire and received 15-20 rounds of AK-47 fire. Artillery was employed as the enemy fled to the east. A sweep of the area revealed negative findings. The results of the contact were 1 friendly WIA and unknown enemy casualties. On 071324H Jun 70, vic BR 292728, 3/B had established an ambush when they observed one enemy moving towards them from the west. The ambush was initiated when the enemy was 50 meters away. No fire was returned and a sweep of the area revealed tracks of 3-5 individuals with a blood trail to the NW. A tracker team was set upon the trail and followed it for 500 meters until it disappeared into a stream. On 111026H Jun 70, vic BR 289736, 1/B was moving NE when an estimated 2 enemy initiated small arms fire from 25 meters to the NW. 2/B returned fire and employed artillery. Results of the contact were negative friendly casualties and unknown enemy casualties. On 151225H Jun 70, vic BR 247747, 1/B was in a patrol base when one enemy was observed 25 meters to the NW. 1/B initiated small arms fire and the enemy dropped to the ground and returned AK-47 fire. Artillery and gunships were employed and a sweep of the area revealed that the enemy had fled to the NW. Results of the contact were 1 friendly WIA and unknown enemy casualties. B Co became OPCON to 1-12 Inf from 20

Jun to 23 Jun. On 231213H Jun 70, B Co completed a CA to LZ vic BR 588854 and began search and destroy operations in AO SCHULTZ. On 25 Jun 70, B Co was airlifted to FSB WELCH and assumed the security and raining mission.

(Editor's Note: Jim "Doc" Hall, 1st Platoon Medic, reports that on 15 Jun 70, There were 3 WIA's, Schrupp, who was evacuated by jungle penetrator, and Herbie Sapp and Gary Robinette, evacuated by dustoff when the Company could find a clearing.)

c. C Company: On 211500 May 70, C Co completed a CA from CAMP RADCLIFF to LZ vic BR 297581 and departed into their AO to begin search and destroy operations. C Co had no contacts and made no significant finds during their operations in AO LINEN. On 301123H May 70, C Co completed a CA from PZ vic BR 302590 to LZ vic BR 278695 and moved overland to vic BR 279748 and began clearing the area for the construction of FSB LANCE. On 7 Jun 70, C Co moved overland from FSB LANCE into their AO to begin search and destroy operations. On 081014H Jun 70, vic BR 278764, C Co CP and 2/C were moving NE when the point element was taken under fire by M-16 and AK-47 fire from 75 meters to the NW. Small arms were returned and artillery employed. A sweep of the area revealed foot prints of 3-5 individuals leading to the N. On 091158H Jun 70, vic BR 277 775, 2/C received 20-25 rounds of small arms fire from SEL BR 279777. Small arms were returned and 81mm blocking fire employed as the enemy fled to the N. A sweep revealed negative findings. On 121030H Jun 70, vic BR 295776 while 3/C was preparing to depart their night location, 1 individual engaged them from 50 meters to the NE. Small arms fire was returned and artillery employed. However, a sweep revealed negative findings.. Results of the contact were 1 friendly KIA, 1 friendly WIA and unknown enemy casualties. On 190938H Jun 70, 1/C OP observed 1 enemy 30 meters to the S and engaged him with small arms fire. The individual fled to the south and 1/C pursued immediately, but had negative findings. On 24 Jun 70, C Co conducted a FE/AL to CAMP RADCLIFF to assume the mission of Golf Course security and training.

d. D Company: On 211624H May 70, D Co completed a CA from CAMP RADCLIFF to LZ vic BR 277545 and began search and destroy operations. On 231400H May 70, vic BR 287539, while 2/D was moving to the east the point element was engaged by 3-4 enemy 30 meters to their front. 2/D returned small arms fire and employed artillery as the enemy fled to the NE. Results are 1 friendly WIA. As the dustoff was lifting off with the WIA it received ground to air fire from SEL BR 290545. 3/D moved in pursuit of the enemy, however, they had negative findings. On 1 Jun 70, D Co closed out FSB WARRIOR and CA 'd to LZ vic BR 245703 and resumed search and destroy operations. On 17 Jun 70, D Co conducted an airlift to CAMP RADCLIFF to begin the mission of Golf Course security under the control of IDCC. On 24 Jun 70, D Co came back under the operational control of 2-35 Inf and conducted a CA to LZ vic BR 447896 to resume search and destroy operations in AO SCHLITZ. On 261435H Jun 70, vic BR 443879, 2/D located a small village consisting of 12 hootches and 12 bunkers.

e. Recon Platoon: On 21 May 70, Rcn Plt conducted a CA from CAMP RADCLIFF to LZ SENATOR to begin RIF operations. On 251010H May 70, vic BR 301560, Rcn Plt OP observed 1 enemy 35 meters to the east. The enemy was engaged with small arms and returned AK-47 fire before fleeing to the east. Rcn Plt pursued the enemy while employing artillery blocking fire, however they had negative findings. Results of the contact were 3 friendly WIA 's due to friendly M-79 shrapnel. Enemy casualties were unknown. On 291226H May 70, vic BR 291548, Rcn Plt OP was approached by 1 enemy. When the enemy was 100 meters to the north he engaged Rcn with small arms fire and fled to the NE. The OP returned fire, however, the contact resulted in 1 friendly WIA with unknown enemy casualties. When the dustoff came in to pick up the WIA, it received ground to air fire from SEL BR 294548. Artillery was employed, however a sweep revealed negative findings. On 31 May 70, Rcn Plt conducted a CA from PZ

BR 307547 to LZ vic BR 287754 to continue RIF operations in the new battalion AO. On 181600H Jun 70, vic BR 353756, Rcn Plt found a village consisting of 20 hootches and 8 bunkers estimated to have been last used on 6 Jun. All hootches and bunkers were destroyed. On 19 Jun 70, Rcn Plt conducted a CA from PZ vic BR 353758 to LZ vic BR 503900 in A0 SCHLITZ to continue RIF operations. At 1206H Rcn Plt received small arms fire from an estimated 4 enemy while awaiting the CA. Small arms fire was returned and artillery employed, however a sweep revealed negative findings. Results of the contact were 1 friendly WIA and unknown enemy casualties. On 260935H Jun 70, vic BR 533945, Rcn Plt received approximately 25 rounds of AK-47 fire from 100 meters to the NW. Small arms were returned and enemy fled to the NE. Rcn sent a sweep in pursuit and employed artillery as blocking fire. The sweep returned with negative findings. On 27 Jun, Rcn Plt was extracted to FSB WELCH to begin stand down in preparation for Recondo School to begin 1 Jul 70.

12. Results: Operation PUTNAM PARAGON yielded the following results:

23 x contacts	13 x long bows
207 x hootches	5 x cross bows
157 x bunkers	75 x AK-47 rds
6610 x lbs. Rice	33 x SKS rds
47 x 82mm rds	13 x graves
90 x charges for 82mm rds	8 x rolls commo wire
30 x primers for 82mm rds	1 x field telephone
9 x fuses for 82mm rds	1 x claymore (US)
64 x fighting positions	Numerous misc. equipment

13. Administrative Matters:

a. Supply: Battalion trains was located at CAMP RADCLIFF, and a forward resupply point for emergency Class I and V was maintained at the forward fire base.

b. Maintenance: Limited organizational maintenance was performed at the trains area, and items requiring repair beyond battalion capability were transferred to C Co, 704 Maint.

c. Treatment of Casualties: Battalion aid stations were located at both the trains and forward fire base. Due to triple canopy jungle in the area of operation, a majority of the casualties had to be extracted with the jungle penetrator of the 'Dustoff' helicopters. All casualties were evacuated to 17th Field Hospital at CAMP RADCLIFF.

d. Transportation: The availability of aircraft for resupply and operations was not a problem; however, bad flying weather very frequently caused delay.

e. Communications: The only communications problems occurring during this operation was due to terrain and weather. This problem was alleviated by relaying between units.

14. Special Equipment and Techniques: The PPS-4 Radar set was employed with great success on FSB WARRIOR and FSB LANCE. Also, the GRC/163 Multiplex radio provided continuous 4-channel communications with BDE and the rear area in CAMP RADCLIFF.

15. Commanders Analysis:

a. Enemy: Throughout the operation the numerous contacts were characterized by sniper fire, ground to air fire and harassing ground fire in proximity to resupply landing zones. Fresh trails or well packed infiltration trails were virtually non-existent yet the enemy appeared to move freely throughout the AO, thus concluding that we were opposed by indigenous Montagnard and Vietnamese VC.

b. Tactics Employed: To meet the challenge of a knowledgeable and cunning enemy, the companies employed a greater variety of stay behind ambushes, more early warning devices and an increased number of OP/LP's. To reduce the influx of helicopters into the area, units walked into their AO's rather than conduct combat assaults. On one occasion, B Co(-) conducted a final extraction while 1st platoon moved overland to the PZ to establish a stay behind ambush. D Co trailed behind A Co to determine if the enemy was searching abandoned night locations. Trip flares and smoke grenades were placed along trails which could be observed from FSB LANCE to pick up any movement and defensive artillery targets were preplanned on each trip wire location.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

EVERETT R. THOMAS
MAJ, Infantry
S3

ANNEXES:

A - AO BUICK

B - AO PORSCHE

C - AO SCHULTZ (all not available - ed.)