

AVDCMH

30 June 1969

SUBJECT: Combat After Action Interview Report

THRU: Commanding General  
United States Army Vietnam  
ATTN: Command Historian  
APO San Francisco 96375

TO: Headquarters  
Department of the Army  
ATTN: O.C.M.H.  
Washington, D.C. 20315

1. NAME AND TYPE OF OPERATION: Fire Support Base Crook (Offensive-Defensive).
2. INCLUSIVE DATES OF OPERATION: 052000 June - 072130 June 1969.
3. LOCATION: Tay Ninh Province, RVN. Map Series 1501, Sheet Number NC48-3. Grid - XT055595.
4. CONTROL HEADQUARTERS: 1st Brigade, 25th Infantry Division.
5. PERSON BEING INTERVIEWED: MAJ Joseph E. Hacia, 05311008, Executive Officer, 3rd Battalion, 22nd Infantry (officer in command of FSB Crook).
6. INTERVIEWING OFFICER: Division Historian
7. TASK ORGANIZATION:
  - a. Company B, 3rd Battalion, 22nd Infantry.
  - b. Battery A, 7th Battalion, 11th Artillery.
  - c. Elements of the 3-22 Infantry communications, medical, support, and mortar platoons.
8. SUPPORTING FORCES: Artillery, aviation and Air Force support was allocated from normal brigade and division assets as the action developed at FSB Crook.
  - a. U.S. Artillery

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(XT272683), II FFV GSR.

(3) One platoon, Battery B, 3-13 Artillery (8 inch), Tay Ninh Base Camp (XT165515), 25th Division Artillery.

b. ARVN Artillery: One platoon, Battery C, 3-38 Artillery (155mm), Cao Ia (XT125502).

c. U.S. Aircraft

5-6 June

- (1) 2 Night Hawks, A/2-25 Avn Bn.
- (2) 2 AH1G (Cobra), B/2-25 Avn Bn.
- (3) 2 AH1G (Cobra), 187th Aslt. Hel. Co.
- (4) 2 AH1G (Cobra), D/3-4 Cav.
- (5) 2 AH1G (Cobra), 334th Aslt Hel. Co.

6-7 June

- 2 Night Hawks, A/2-25 Avn Bn.
- 2 UH1H (Gunships), B/2-25 Avn Bn.
- 1 UH1H (Flare), B/2-25 Avn Bn.
- 2 AH1G (Cobra), 187th Aslt. Hel.
- 4 AH1G (Cobra), D/3-4 Cav.

d. U.S. Air Force Aircraft

5-6 June

- (1) 2 F4C Fighters
- (2) 8 F-100 Fighters
- (3) 2 AC-119 Gunships
- (4) 2 AC-47 Gunships

6-7 June

- 2 F4C Fighters
- 10 F-100 Fighters
- 1 AC-119 Gunship
- 2 AC-47 Gunships

9. INTELLIGENCE:

a. Enemy - Prior to the beginning of the attacks of Fire Support Base Crook intelligence indicated that a high point of enemy activity was to occur between 1 and 10 June 1969. Information received from documents captured on 23 and 28 May by the 1st Air Cavalry Division revealed that the 88th NVA Regiment would attack a U.S. position in the Tay Ninh area. A specific time frame for the attack was not mentioned in the documents; however, they did disclose that the cadre of the 88th Regiment were to finish training courses conducted at the Regimental Headquarters by 1 June. At this time the Regiment was believed to be dispersed in central War Zone C. The remaining two regiments of the 9th VC/NVA

Crook identified the 3rd Battalion, 272nd NVA Regiment as the attacking force on 5-6 June, and the 2nd and 3rd Battalions, 88th NVA Regiment as the attacking forces on 6-7 June. The actions and location of the 3rd Battalion, 272nd NVA Regiment just prior to the 5-6 June attack are uncertain; however, the 2nd Battalion, 88th Regiment with a strength of 180 men, had moved to the vicinity of XT049678 on 4 June and built defensive positions and continued training. The 3rd Battalion, 88th Regiment with a strength of 200 men had moved to a temporary base camp in the vicinity of XT1061 on 4 June. A 50-man company from the 271st NVA Regiment was attached to the 3rd Battalion. The attacks on FSB Crook coincided with the Midway meeting of the U.S. and South Vietnamese Presidents. It is likely that the enemy objective was to gain a moral or psychological victory, in order to counter the impact of this meeting.

b. Terrain - The area surrounding Fire Support Base Crook is flat and generally forested. The area to the east is triple-canopy jungle. To the north, there is scattered double-canopy jungle. The area to the south is secondary growth, while to the southwest and west are abandoned rice paddies. The Soui Ben Da stream flows from north to south, 300 meters to the west of the base. Fields of observation and artillery direct fire are good, extending from the minimum of 220 meters on the east to 350 meters on the north and south and up to 1000 meters to the southwest. Fields of fire for small arms are excellent out to 200 meters. The wooded areas on the east and northeast offer the best avenues of approach; however, there is a destroyed village to the south with broken ground and brush which offers a secondary approach to within 200 meters of the base. The base is positioned astride an east-west road, and there is a north-south trail east of the base which provide rapid approaches into the general area. The only significant obstacle to movement in the area is the Soui Ben Da stream on the west which is not fordable in the immediate vicinity of the base, although there is a footbridge at the road crossing (See Inclosure 2).

c. Weather - During the period 5 to 8 June the area around FSB Crook was characterized by partly cloudy skies in the morning and afternoon with a general overcast (ceiling 1000 feet) by 1900 hours. There were intermittent rain showers in the late afternoon and early evening in the area. At approximately 2400 hours, however, the sky would clear for a radius of five miles around FSB Crook, providing excellent observation and flying conditions.

10. MISSION: Fire Support Base Crook was established in April 1969 to interdict VC/NVA movement northwest of Tay Ninh City and to support the platoon and company sized offensive operations conducted in that area.

11. EXECUTION: The first indication of the impending attack on Fire Support Base Crook came at 2000 hours on 5 June when the base monitored seismic sensor activations, indicating heavy activity 950 meters east and 550 meters north-

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artillery battery within the base which engaged each location with time fu... direct fire (Killer Junior). Beginning at 2130 hours, the Battalion Executive Officer requested interdiction artillery fires on the trails and likely assembly areas around the base, and placed the base on 100% alert. As the clouds cleared shortly after midnight, an observer with a starlight scope in the tower began to sight the same small groups that had been detected by radar. From 0130 hours to 0255 hours the movement around the base generally ceased but the interdiction fires were continued.

At 0255 hours, the enemy initiated an attack by fire. 107mm and 122mm rockets, 75mm recoilless rifle rounds, 82mm and 60mm mortar rounds, RPG's and small arms fire began to impact in and around the base. The rate of indirect fire was 80 rounds per minute for the first five minutes and approximately 40 rounds per minute for the next one and one-half hours. Most of the rockets passed over the base and impacted outside the wire to the east. One man was killed by a mortar round as an L.P. to the west was being withdrawn. There was little damage and were few casualties within the perimeter. Coordinating with the attack by fire, the enemy launched a battalion sized assault from the south and east. (See Inclosure 3). The troops within the base laid down a heavy volume of grazing fire, as the howitzers fired "Killer Junior" to the depth of 150-200 meters all around the base. The supporting 155mm artillery was used to hit the enemy attack positions in the woodline to the south, while the 8 inch artillery fired deeper into this area. The base's 81mm and 4.2 inch mortars fired on the woodline to the east, and 175mm artillery was used to suppress the enemy firing positions to the north. The intense defensive fire slowed the enemy ground assault but a 16 man element did breach the outer wire on the south with bangalore torpedoes. The men on the bunker line stopped this group with automatic weapons and claymore mines. Although their attack was stopped, the bulk of the enemy force remained in the open, firing small arms and RPG's at the bunkers. At approximately 0400 hours, AC-47 and AC-119 gunships, helicopter fire teams, and Air Force fighters arrived over the area. The 175mm artillery fire was shifted 1 kilometer to the north, thus clearing the area to the north and west for engagement by the gunships. The AC-47 gunship poured fire into the open area around the base for 360 degrees. As the helicopters moved in, they were engaged by numerous .51 caliber machinegun fire (estimated 15) around the area, with the heaviest concentration on the west. One observation helicopter was damaged and the Brigade command and control ship received five hits. As the helicopters suppressed the anti-aircraft fire, the intense supporting fires forced the enemy to withdraw into the jungle. (See Inclosure 4). By 0530 there was only sporadic fire from the surrounding area, but artillery and TAC air continued to hit suspected targets. At 0600 hours, Company B sent a platoon through the break in the wire to search through the area to the south. As they moved into the old village area they were engaged at close range by a group of 10-15 NVA who had remained concealed in spider holes. The Company B Commander and three radio operators were wounded by grenades. The platoon moved back to the bunker line by bounds and

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soldiers were dressed in khaki uniforms and wearing "Ho Chi Minh" sandals. Each man had been equipped with an AK-47 rifle, a bandolier, 8 to 10 hand grenades, a cup-type gas mask, and was carrying an extra 5 RPG rounds. The bodies were significantly free of extraneous material such as documents, diaries or other personal effects. Three infiltration passes were found, which identified the battalion as an element of the 272nd NVA Regiment.

Later that morning, Companies A and C of the battalion were air-landed approximately 5 kilometers north of FSB Crook to search south toward the base. At 1245 hours, Company A became engaged with an unknown sized enemy force and light contact continued until 1545 hours. Due to this contact the search north of the base was not completed on 6 June. On the evening of 6 June, the pattern of activity resumed in an almost identical fashion. From 2000 to 2030 hours, the seismic sensors northwest and east of the base transmitted heavy activity. The radar detected two groups of approximately 40 personnel moving 1500 meters north of the base. From 2000 to 0100 hours, the radar continued to detect groups of 3 to 5 men in the woodlines all around the base. Each area of activity was engaged with mortar and artillery fire, or direct fire from the howitzers within the base.

By 0100 hours, the majority of the movement had ceased, but all areas continued to be engaged with direct (Killer Junior) and indirect fires. At 0200 hours, a Night Hawk helicopter, flying in to support the action, detected large groups of enemy moving toward the base along the road from the east. Artillery fires were immediately shifted to attack these groups. At 0255 the enemy attack by fire began with greater intensity than the previous night. For the first five minutes the rate of fire was 150 rounds of rocket, mortar, and RPG fire per minute, and approximately 50 rounds per minute for the next one and one-half hours. Three U.S. soldiers were wounded by the initial volley. Coordinated with the attack by fire, the enemy launched a two battalion ground assault, one battalion moving out of the woodline to the northeast, and the other attacking from the northwest. (See Inclosure 5). The base engaged the attacking enemy with "Killer Junior" and automatic weapons. The Night Hawk helicopter strafed the enemy coming out of the jungle to the northeast, while two helicopter fire teams hit the battalion on the northwest with machinegun and rocket fire; these gunships were followed by TAC air strikes which dropped napalm and fragmentation bombs on this force. An AC-47 gunship and helicopter gunships engaged the .51 caliber machineguns which had begun firing from the west of the stream. 175mm artillery was placed on the jungle to the northwest, while mortar fire, 155mm and 8 inch howitzer fire was used to suppress the enemy firing positions to the east and south. The area was under continuous illumination by the AC-119 gunship, which engaged the area outside the wire with machine gun fire. (See Inclosure 6) The enemy coming from the northwest breached the first wire barrier, but were stopped by the intense defensive fires. The attack from the northeast was stopped before it reached the wire. The continuous defensive fires forced the enemy to attempt to withdraw, but the volume of automatic fire and bursting munitions

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For the Battalion was air-landed southeast of the base and began a sweep to west. Company C landed east of the base at 0845 hours and began a search of that area. The Battalion Reconnaissance Platoon, and two platoons from Company D were brought into reinforce Company B, and to assist in the sweep to the north.

As the sweep around the base concluded, 323 NVA bodies, 10 PW's, 39 AK-47 rifles, 2 light machineguns, 2 60mm mortars, 90 rounds of 60mm ammunition, 2 RPG launchers, 230 RPG's, 500 hand grenades, 84 satchel charges, 10 Bangalore torpedoes, and 3000 rounds of small arms ammunition were recovered. That evening at 2000 hours, the Base Commander (MAJ Hacia) ordered a test firing of all weapons as a precaution in the event of continued enemy attacks. Moments after the test firing began, the base received small arms fire from 360 degrees and several 75mm recoilless rifle rounds. Within 15 minutes they also received a light volume of mortar and rocket fire. The base returned the fire with automatic weapons, "Killer Junior", and artillery. This duel lasted until 2100 hours, when firing ceased. A third enemy attack had been aborted by the initiation of the test fire. 3 NVA bodies were recovered from this attack.

12. COMMAND: The base was under command of Major Joseph E. Hacia, Executive Officer, 3rd Battalion, 22nd Infantry. CPT Larry B. Thomas commanded B Company of the Battalion and CPT Dickson A. Neal commanded Battery A, 7th Battalion, 11th Artillery. Major Hacia alternated his position between the observation tower and the TOC bunker. CPT Thomas positioned himself along the bunker line at the point of the main attacks. The battery commander remained at the battery firing position.

#### 13. COMMUNICATIONS:

a. Radio - The operation was controlled on the Battalion (3-22 Inf) Command Net. The TOC bunker had one radio on the Battalion Command Net, one radio on the Battalion Logistics Net, and one radio on the Company B Command Net. In the tower there were two radios, one on the Battalion Command Net and one on Battery A Fire Direction Net. The Company B CP had one radio on the Company B Command Net and one radio on the Battalion Command Net. Battery A operated on their Fire Direction Net and monitored the Infantry Battalion Command Net.

b. Wire - The communications bunker was located 15 meters from the TOC. The switchboard had connections to the TOC, the tower, the FDC, the Company B CP, and the platoon CP's. In addition to this wire net, there was a "Hot Loop" connecting the TOC, Company B CP, FDC, and platoon CP's. There were also direct lines from the tower to the TOC and FDC. The switchboard operators in the communications center had been instructed to connect all stations in a conference call at the first sign of enemy contact, this addition to the "Hot Loop" provided two open circuit telephone systems.

14. RESUPPLY: Seven CH-47 sorties were required to resupply FSB Crook on the

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|    |                      |         |                  |
|----|----------------------|---------|------------------|
| b. | M60 7.62mm           |         | - 120,820 rounds |
| c. | Hand Grenades (Frag) |         | - 300            |
| d. | Caliber .50 MG       |         | - 13,000 rounds  |
| e. | 66mm Rocket (LAW)    |         | - 156            |
| f. | 4.2" Mortar:         | HE      | - 477 rounds     |
|    |                      | ILLUM   | - 353 rounds     |
|    |                      | WP      | - 57 rounds      |
|    |                      | CS      | - 34 rounds      |
| g. | 81mm Mortar:         | HE      | - 822 rounds     |
|    |                      | ILLUM   | - 567 rounds     |
|    |                      | WP      | - 93 rounds      |
| h. | 40mm Grenades:       | HE      | - 5197 rounds    |
|    |                      | CS      | - 114 rounds     |
| i. | 90mm RR:             | HE      | - 38 rounds      |
|    |                      | BEEHIVE | - 192 rounds     |
| j. | Claymore Mines       |         | - 274            |
| k. | Trip Flares          |         | - 328            |
| l. | Hand Flares          |         | - 324            |
| m. | 105mm Howitzer       |         | - 1764 rounds    |
| n. | 155mm Howitzer       |         | - 843 rounds     |
| o. | 8 inch Howitzer      |         | - 96 rounds      |
| p. | 175mm Howitzer       |         | - 75 rounds      |

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ter, fused with a nonelectric blasting cap, and connected to the shaped charge with detonating cord. Upon ignition, the C4 ruptures the rolled wire as the shaped charge blows the disintegrating mass in the direction of the enemy. A battery of these devices were positioned around Fire Support Base Crook and used devastating effect on the enemy assault troops.

b. Fougasse. Eight 55 gallon drums of Fougasse were positioned around the base, but the enemy troops took great care in avoiding the ground in front of these devices.

c. Six of the eight M-60 machineguns belonging to the artillery battery were placed on the bunker line and manned by the rifle company. This doubled the number of machineguns firing from the bunker line.

d. The rifle company 1st Sergeant maintained a P.L.L. for small arms and established a repair point in a bunker. Weapons which malfunctioned were immediately brought to this point for on site repair.

e. Three smudge pots were kept at each perimeter bunker, allowing the line of the camp to be marked throughout the night.

f. This Battalion had adopted a policy of rotating rifle companies in and out of the Fire Support Base at two to three week intervals. This periodic change increased the morale and alertness of the troops and caused them to view their new surroundings with a critical eye. Constant improvements were made in the defenses and internal arrangements of the base, in a spirit of competition between the companies.

g. A ready reaction force was composed of support personnel and organized into three squads with an AN/PRC-25 radio and M-60 machinegun each. They were rehearsed to react as squads, reinforcing designated sectors, or to react as an entire platoon to a major threat from any direction.

h. The Battalion maintained a forward aid station at Fire Support Base Crook, manned by the Battalion Surgeon and three senior aid men from the Battalion Medical Platoon. Thus they had the capacity to perform life saving surgery in the event that the enemy anti-aircraft fire would delay medical evacuation. There were landing zones inside and outside the perimeter. Medical evacuation was performed at 0530 hours each morning from the interior landing zone. Gunships provided cover for the MEDEVAC helicopters.

i. Ammunition was prestocked in three main ammunition supply points and in eighteen small supply points positioned behind the fighting bunkers. This precluded any heavy loss of ammunition from enemy fire and reduced the amount of time and exposure of personnel in resupplying the fighting bunkers.

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b. Enemy: KIA - 402, P.O.W. - 10.

**Weapons Captured:**

|                        |      |
|------------------------|------|
| AK-47                  | - 54 |
| Light MG               | - 2  |
| .51 Cal. MG            | - 1  |
| R.P.G. Rocket Launcher | - 3  |
| 60mm Mortar            | - 2  |

**Ammunition Captured:**

|                       |          |
|-----------------------|----------|
| 60mm rounds           | - 90     |
| R.P.G. rounds         | - 230    |
| Hand Grenades         | - 500    |
| Satchel Charges       | - 84     |
| Bangalore Torpedoes   | - 10     |
| Small Arms Ammunition | - 13,000 |

17. ANALYSIS: The overwhelming victory achieved at Fire Support Base Crook is attributable to planning and motivation. The personnel at FSB Crook were physically and mentally prepared for any contingency. When the enemy moved en masse against them, they calmly and efficiently destroyed them.

a. The physical structure of the base provided excellent frontal, rear, lateral and overhead protection for the personnel, and it was constantly being improved. Three wire obstacles stood between the bunker line and the enemy. Flat, well-cleared fields of fire surrounded the base. The fire power of all weapons in the base could be used against an attacking force. Six howitzers, four mortars, twelve machine guns, automatic rifles, recoilless rifles, grenade launchers, claymore mines, and "Super Claymores" provided a shield of fire around the base.

b. A well-equipped and trained reaction force was available to reinforce any sector of the base.

c. Communications, ammunition supply, weapons maintenance, and medical aid were specifically structured to function efficiently under heavy attack.

d. Not only was the system of fire support preplanned, it was thoroughly understood by all concerned. The Rifle Company Commander, Battery Commander, the Artillery Liaison Officer, the Brigade Air Liaison Officer, the Brigade Aviation Officer, the S3 Air, platoon leaders and forward observers had all been briefed that, in the event of an attack on the base, the 155mm and 8 inch support-

AC-119 gunships flying above the path of incoming artillery. In this manner there would be continuous fire in concentric rings around the base, and all able supporting fires could be employed simultaneously. When this system had been implemented, it was done rapidly and smoothly, since everyone understood the plan.

e. Early warning from radar, seismic sensors, and night observation devices enabled the base to initiate a preemptive attack by fire on the enemy weapons emplacements and attack positions. Although this did not prevent the enemy attack by fire or ground assault, it did severely reduce their coordination and effectiveness as evidenced by a 400 to 1 KIA ratio.

f. After the enemy ground attack failed, the supporting fires were employed to pursue and destroy the withdrawing enemy. This retention of an offensive spirit was the most significant factor in this operation. A defensive situation was turned into an offensive situation in which the destruction of the massed enemy forces became the objective.

- 7 Incl
- 1 - Situation Overlay
- 2 - ~~Terrain Photograph~~ (Incl wd HQ, DA)
- 3 - Enemy Situation 5-6 June
- 4 - Friendly Fire 5-6 June
- 5 - Enemy Situation 6-7 June
- 6 - Friendly Fire 6-7 June
- 7 - Air Photograph of FSB Crook

*Michael D. Keating*

MICHAEL D. KEATING  
Major, Armor  
Commanding

CF:

- 2 - COMUSMACV, Attn: J3
- 2 - CG, USARV, Attn: G3
- 2 - CG, II FFV, Attn: G3
- 1 - CG, 1st Inf Div, Attn: G3
- 1 - CG, 9th Inf Div, Attn: G3
- 1 - CG, 1st Air Cav Div, Attn: G3
- 1 - CG, CMAC, Attn: G3
- 1 - CG, 199th LIB, Attn: G3
- 1 - CO, 11th ACR, Attn: S3
- 1 - CG, RTAVF, Attn: G3
- 1 - CG, ATF, Attn: G3

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Cambodia

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Situation Overlay  
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INCLOSURE 1

