

## The Battle of Suoi Tre:

# Viet Cong Infantry Attack on a Fire Base Ends in Slaughter When Armor Arrives

by First Sergeant Christopher P. Worick

*"It Was Like the 10 o'clock Late Show"*

### Prelude

In 1967, the troop buildup in Vietnam was in full swing with no end in sight. American commanders, by then equipped with more personnel and supplies, decided to revise the overall strategy of local containment for a more aggressive approach. Combined arms operations would now venture farther into enemy-held territory in an attempt to draw the communist forces into battle.

Operation Junction City, the largest combined arms operation to that date, began on February 22nd. The operation was designed to disrupt the Viet Cong Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN), destroy the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces, and clear War Zone C, III Corps Tactical Zone base areas in the northern Tay Ninh Province.<sup>1</sup> Junction City would reinforce the necessity for armor and cavalry for the remainder of the war.

The initial phase of Junction City kicked off with airmobile troops lifted into the northwest corner of the operational area near the Cambodian border.<sup>2</sup> The mission was to establish fire support bases for the follow-on infantry and establish a horseshoe blocking position.<sup>3</sup> With this in place, mechanized forces began their attack north into the open end of the horseshoe toward the U end of the position. Initial enemy contact was sporadic; but mechanized units found VC base camps, hospitals, bunker systems, and small groups of Viet Cong. Dense jungle and enemy mines made progress slow for the armored forces.

Upon reaching the northern limit of advance, the mechanized units wheeled west to "squeeze" the enemy.<sup>4</sup> Feeling the pressure, V.C. resistance began to stiffen until they were finally drawn out in an attempt to boost their sagging fortunes.

The last significant engagement involving the use of armor during OPERATION JUNCTION CITY occurred at a remote fire base on March 21st. It would become known as the battle of Suoi Tre or Fire Support Base Gold.<sup>5</sup> The shock effect of armor would turn an enemy victory into a disastrous defeat.

### If You Build It, They Will Come.

On March 19th, almost a month into the operation, the 3rd Battalion, 22nd Infantry (-) and the 2nd Battalion, 77th Artillery (-) began airlifting three batteries of 105mm howitzers and about 450 troops into an egg-shaped clearing near the former village of Suoi Tre. Their mission was to establish Fire Support Base Gold and provide indirect fire support for the 4th Infantry Division's 3rd Brigade Task Force.<sup>6</sup> This particular area had been quiet thus far and heavy action was not expected. When the first helicopters set down in the LZ, it became obvious that something was different. Viet Cong scouts, waiting in the surrounding woods, had placed command detonated mines facing inward in the clearing. The detonation of these explosives destroyed three Hueys. Undeterred, the Americans continued to secure the perimeter and establish the fire base, despite the fact that an unusually large number of VC were spotted moving in the area.<sup>7</sup>

What American troops didn't know was that they had landed virtually on top of approximately 2,000 Viet Cong troops spearheaded by the 272nd Main Force Regiment of the 9th Viet Cong Division.<sup>8</sup> Disturbed by this sudden threat, the enemy observed the Americans for the next two days while formulating their plan of attack. Feeling that the odds were in their favor on account of their numerical superiority, the VC would use speed and surprise to overwhelm the Americans. By using human wave assaults to quickly move in close to the defenders,

they would deny U.S. forces the ability to use their technological advantage.

At FSB Gold, the infantry and artillerymen continued to reinforce and improve their perimeter defenses. They built defensive bunkers, rehearsed contingency plans, conducted ambush patrols, and constructed 18 firing positions for the artillery batteries.<sup>9</sup> To the southwest of Gold were elements of the 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry, the tank-mech infantry task force of 2nd Battalion, 22nd Infantry (Mechanized) and the 2nd Battalion, 34th Armor(-).<sup>10</sup>

Under the command of LTC Raymond Stailey, 2-34 Armor had moved north on 20 March as part of the 3rd Bde, 4th ID Task Force, commanded by COL Marshall Garth. The TF had been placed under operational control of the 25th Infantry Division for "Junction City." 2-34 Armor had been conducting search and destroy operations, which consisted of clearing 10 x 10 kilometer quadrants, looking for any sign of the VC.<sup>11</sup> On March 20th, COL Garth ordered 2-34 AR to link up with 2/22 IN (Mech), commanded by LTC Ralph Julian, and continue their push north as a combined arms team toward the Suoi Samat River. Earlier that afternoon, the scout platoon of 2/22 Infantry had cleared a trail 1500 meters to the north but had been unable to find a ford.<sup>12</sup> The recon platoon from 2-34 would have better luck in the search.

Arriving ahead of the main body at the river, the 2-34 scouts found that the dry season had reduced the river to a muddy stream. A possible fording site had been located at a bend in the river; however, bridging assets would still be required in order to get vehicles across without getting stuck. LTC Stailey met with his scouts at the river and coordinated for an M113 to be sunk in the river and two AVLBs set across if the situation required it. This contingency plan was then passed along to all maneuver elements. Separated from the firebase by only two kilo-

Viet Cong preparing to assault the new fire base were discovered by an American patrol, triggering the beginning of the enemy assault from the woods at right. As the eastern perimeter of the base began to collapse, armored units crossed the river south of the base and attacked south to north, breaking the enemy assault.

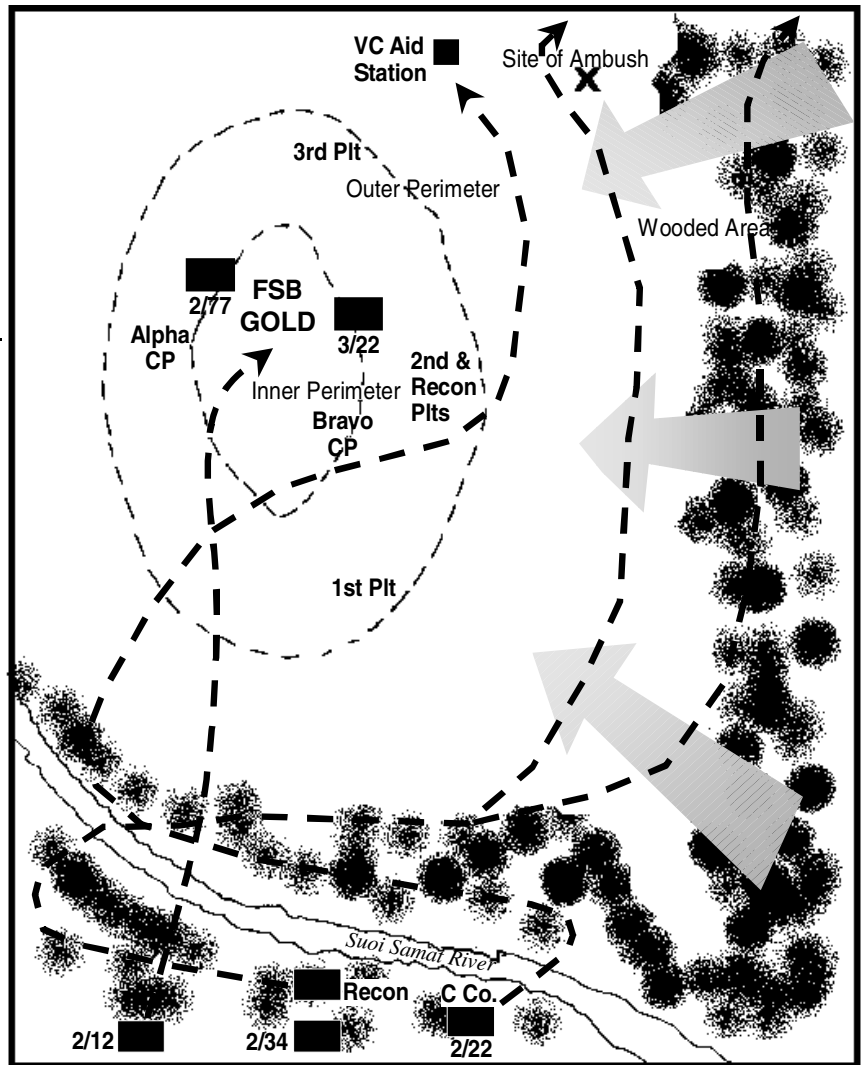
meters, LTC Stailey felt confident that if any trouble should occur, his units were in a good position to provide support. Exchanging information with the firebase commander on the task force net, LTC Stailey received the troop disposition at Gold and the extent of the outer perimeter's location.<sup>13</sup> With darkness approaching, 2/22 IN and 2-34 AR had conducted their linkup and began setting up for the night. Normally a clearing would have been preferred, but none had been located or indicated on the maps. With the rear elements closing in on their respective unit night positions, LTC Stailey briefed his commanders on the current situation; he decided to wait until first light and resume the move toward the river.<sup>14</sup>

1LT Denny Hollister, executive officer of A Company, 2-34 AR, recalls the movement:

The day before the battle, our unit, A Company, 2-34 and 2/22 IN (Mech), made little progress due to the heavy jungle and various breakdowns, mainly thrown tracks. By this time our tanks, which were old when we got them, had sustained months of mine and RPG damage. Also, the daily routine of bulldozing the jungle was beginning to take its toll. Throwing a track (especially off a vehicle that was already short tracked due to mine damage) often meant that everything was wedged in a tree or other jungle growth. The process of repairing it was very labor-intensive, as only a tanker can understand. As a result of all this, we did not make our assigned objective for that day. Since our objective was mainly just driving around in the woods until we ran into someone, it really didn't matter in the overall scope of the war — but it sure did upset the brigade commander (COL Marshall Garth). As a punishment, we did not receive any fresh water that evening.<sup>15</sup>

### First Blood

Around 0600 the next morning, radio reports indicated possible enemy move-



ment on the perimeter of the Fire Support Base.<sup>16</sup> First contact with the enemy was at 0631.<sup>17</sup> An ambush patrol from B Company, 3/22 IN, located 500 meters from the perimeter of Gold, broke down their ambush site when they spotted two VC. Taking the soldiers under fire, they discovered the enemy was in the tall grass all around them. With only part of the patrol making it back to the FSB, five soldiers were left pinned down. A squad was quickly assembled to provide help, but several short bursts of AK-47 fire indicated that any survivors had been killed. The sound of mortar rounds leaving tubes sent men diving for cover as 61mm and 82mm rounds began exploding throughout the fire support base.<sup>18</sup> Within minutes, the mortar fire shifted to the western side of the perimeter.

As the enemy continued to pound the western perimeter and the artillery batteries in the center of the FSB, the tempo of the battle increased. Scores of Viet Cong troops emerged from the jungle in a three-pronged assault along the eastern side of the perimeter. Small arms, RPGs,

and recoilless rifle fire peppered the defenders along the outer perimeter. As counter-mortar fire went out, the amount of incoming fire in the FSB diminished. It was only 0638, seven minutes since the ambush patrol had set off the VC attack.<sup>19</sup> Immediately, it was obvious that this unprecedented daylight attack was not a small enemy force. The enemy's boldness and sheer numbers indicated that they were determined to overrun the fire support base.

While tactical air support was called in, all platoons along the eastern perimeter reported enemy in the wire.<sup>20</sup> The enemy surrounded some positions, with one platoon reporting hand-to-hand combat. The Artillery Reaction Force, which had rehearsed this move the day prior, was put on standby. With his company decisively engaged, the B-3/22 IN commander called for 105mm howitzer fire as close to the perimeter as necessary. He wanted to plaster the wood line and get as many troops emerging into the open as possible.<sup>21</sup> A forward air controller notified the fire base that four sorties of fighters were

inbound and would be on station shortly.<sup>22</sup>

Monitoring the situation from his helicopter, COL Garth ordered the armored units to move across the river in an effort to assist the embattled fire base. LTC Julian, commander of 2/22 IN (Mech), immediately ordered C-2/22 and an attached tank platoon from 2-34 to move across the river and head northwest using the trees for cover. Camping near the river the night before, a fording site was found that would not require bridging assets.<sup>23</sup>

With the C-2/22 IN team on the move ahead of the TF main body, the remaining units were cranked up, waiting to move. At 0700, incoming mortar fire landed among 2-34 Armor's tank positions.<sup>24</sup> Although ineffective, the mortar fire caused the tanks to disperse in order to get out of the impact area.<sup>25</sup> Straddling each other's tracks to clear a path wide enough for the tanks, the M113s pushed forward as fast as the jungle growth allowed.<sup>26</sup> The smell of diesel smoke filled the air as the two battalions crashed through the underbrush. The mortar fire gradually tapered off, with no casualties or vehicle damage reported. Although initial progress along the trail went well, maintaining dispersion and getting all the vehicles to converge on the fording site proved time-consuming. COL Garth, anxious to get a relief column to the fire base, radioed, "If a vehicle throws a track, leave it. Let's get in there and relieve the force!"<sup>27</sup>

As the mechanized forces moved toward the sound of the guns, the situation at Gold deteriorated. The outer perimeter along the eastern side was collapsing. The B Company, 2/22 IN commander called for the artillery reaction force in an attempt to reinforce the line.<sup>28</sup> Additionally, he told his fire support officer to move the artillery fire to within 100 meters of the perimeter. With all three platoons fighting hand-to-hand, it appeared that the reaction force would not make it in time. Ammunition was being consumed at an alarming rate. The 3rd platoon leader reported that he had VC in the foxholes at the center of his position. Suddenly the 1st platoon leader reported that the reaction force had arrived and was counterattacking on line across his positions. For a brief moment the situation had stabilized.<sup>29</sup>

At 0715, a silver Phantom jet swooped overhead, passing along the edge of the woods to the east, and pulled up to the north, followed by the thunder of ordnance exploding. The Air Force had ar-

rived! A second F-4 repeated the lead plane's maneuver. The FAC plane could be seen circling to the southeast, directing the fighter-bombers. Then two more Phantoms appeared and dropped their loads along the eastern edge of the fire base. Trying to catch enemy troops in the open, the FAC moved some of the air strikes more closely along the southeast corner of the perimeter and to hit the VC with napalm.<sup>30</sup>

By the time the planes launched their sorties, enemy mortar fire had tapered off because of continuing artillery counter-mortar fire. The VC were still shooting at the artillery positions with RPG, 75mm, and 57mm recoilless rifle fire from the woodline.<sup>31</sup> The enemy raked the firebase with automatic fire as the attack on the eastern perimeter intensified.

At 0745, the FAC plane was shot down by heavy machine-gun fire and crashed into the trees beyond the fire base, killing both the pilot and observer.<sup>32</sup> As the ramifications of the loss sank in, there was a lull in the air strikes until a new FAC could come on station.<sup>33</sup> The battle would now take a radical turn of events.

### Desperate Measures

The B Company commander directed 105mm artillery rounds, known as "beehives," to be loaded immediately; the rounds had not been used previously because of their classified nature.<sup>34</sup> Packed with thousands of small steel flechettes in a single projectile, a beehive could cut a wide swath in the enemy ranks. The B Company commander decided to use the beehives in the 1st platoon sector first.<sup>35</sup> After telling the platoon leader to get his men under cover, the commander instructed the guns to fire toward the east and southeast. The telltale effect was immediate. Although wide gaps had been blown in the attackers' ranks, more were requested along the whole eastern side. Due to a shortage of beehive rounds, a reaction force from A-3/22 was requested at 0800, to reinforce the B Company infantrymen. The A-3/22 CO, said that his 20-man force was on the move enroute to Bravo's positions.<sup>36</sup>

Within minutes, the reaction force linked up with B Company. Despite the best efforts of the artillery firing over the defenders heads, the VC were in scattered foxholes. More importantly, ammunition was now in short supply. With troops still emerging from the wood line, the order was given at 0820 for the eastern perimeter troops to fall back to secondary positions.<sup>37</sup> Platoons began bounding back to their alternate positions in a move re-

hearsed the day prior. By 0840, B Company had completed its move.<sup>38</sup> This allowed the artillerymen to drop the tubes and fire at point-blank range making the beehives even more effective. A Company now experienced problems of its own. The VC overran a quad .50 caliber machine gun, positioned on the northern perimeter. Attempting to turn it on the defenders, it was destroyed by a direct hit from a 105mm howitzer.<sup>39</sup>

Alarmed by the radio reports at Gold, the tank/infantry task force moved with all possible speed through the heavy vegetation in its attempt to relieve the base. Although sporadic sniper fire hampered their movement, they made progress. A new forward air controller arrived back on station at 0845 and coordinated more airstrikes.<sup>40</sup> Helicopter gunships had also been called in to assist the defenders. CH-47 Chinook helicopters dropped fresh supplies of ammunition directly into the firebase.<sup>41</sup> From his vantage point above the battlefield, LTC Stailey helped to direct his battalion's lead elements to the river from his helicopter. Calling forward the AVLBs and an M113 from the headquarters section, the contingency plan went into effect. The APC was driven to the middle of the river to act as an abutment. Once the crew was clear of their M113, the scissor bridges were set in, finally spanning the river.<sup>42</sup>

As the TF main body closed on the fording site, air strikes were within 100 meters of Gold.<sup>43</sup> Napalm was burning up the foliage around the base that enemy troops were using for concealment. Indirect fire to hit the troops still emerging from the jungle was on hold because of the aircraft in the area. Like a swarm of ants, the VC continued to advance on the defending troops.<sup>44</sup> With beehive rounds expended, the artillerymen resorted to firing HE at point-blank range. Enemy troops were within hand grenade range of the command bunker and five meters of the 3/22 IN Battalion Aid Station.<sup>45</sup> Having borne the brunt of the enemy's repeated attacks, B Company was on the verge of being overrun. A Company, under moderate pressure, still held its original positions, but in some places the VC were within 15 meters of their line.<sup>46</sup>

### Into the Maelstrom

With C Company, 2-34 leading the TF main body across the Suoi Samat, the 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry, had already moved up on foot and were just to the south of Gold in the woodline.<sup>47</sup> C Company, 2/22 IN, with its attached tank platoon, had also made it to the edge of the

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trees in good time. The situation at the fire base had rapidly gotten worse. VC soldiers continued to pour from the woods from the north and east.<sup>48</sup> Unknown to the VC troops, 2-34 Armor and 2/22 Infantry were consolidating in the wood line preparing to assault. The plan called for C-2/22 IN to attack northwest through the FSB and swing north.<sup>49</sup> The task force main body would skirt the wood line moving east and emerge swinging north, immediately spreading out to have room for fire and movement. They would continue along the wood line destroying all enemy forces in order to secure the eastern perimeter and prepare for a counterattack.

As the end of the column moved up to within 50 meters of the wood line, preparing to counterattack, the defenders at Gold were in dire straits. Some of the troops had begun to destroy their weapons to prevent capture. Along the B-3/22 sector, many troops were down to one grenade and two magazines apiece.<sup>50</sup> Small pockets of men, out of ammunition, had resorted to using weapons or entrenching tools as clubs in desperate battles for survival. 2/12 Infantry began its attack by firing directly into the VC flank as they emerged at the southern end of the clearing. Artillery fire was immediately adjusted to prevent hitting the friendly troops.<sup>51</sup> As the VC continued to advance through the smoke, a new sound was added to the chaos, growing louder from the south.

### Fire and Maneuver

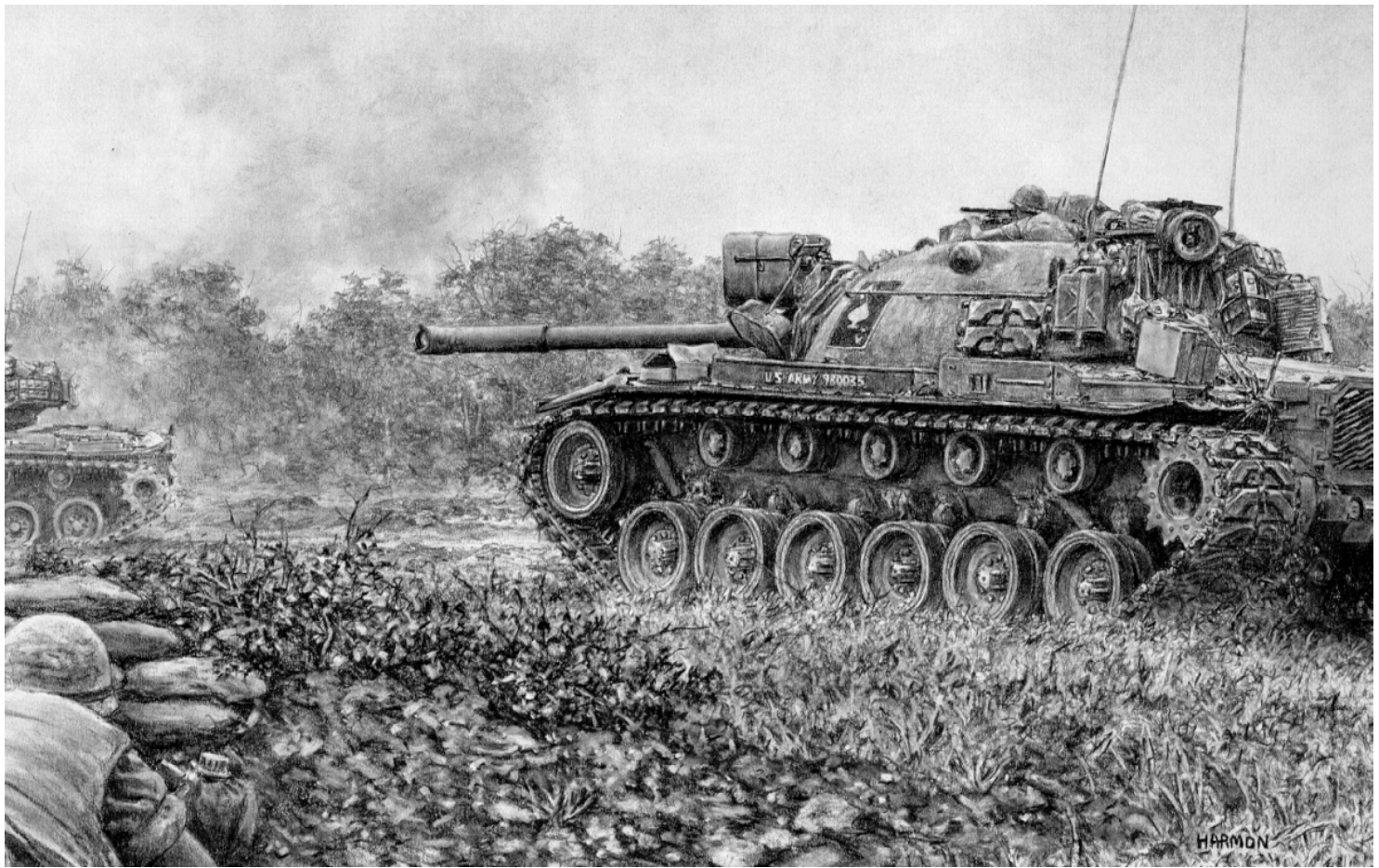
At 0912, with canister rounds exploding among the troops in the open and machine guns blazing, the tanks and APCs broke cover of the trees and began to fan out on line, suddenly throwing the enemy off balance.<sup>52</sup> Skirting the tree line toward the north, one tank crewman observed; "It was like shooting fish in a barrel."<sup>53</sup> Responding to this new threat, groups of VC began to rush the vehicles but were quickly crushed by the rolling juggernaut. Others foolishly attempted to climb onto the tanks and had to be taken



off with pistols, hand grenades, and even pioneer tools. Anatol Kononenko, a 4.2 mortar forward observer with 2/22 IN, observed two tanks actually fire at each other using canister rounds to remove VC troops from their tanks.<sup>54</sup> PFC Gary Lapp, of C Company, 2-34 AR, was assigned as loader on C-25. Moving into the battle area, Lapp recalls the battle:

As the tanks were racing up and down the trails to get to Gold, I was down inside. The center of gravity on a tank is so high, that once it starts bucking back and forth, it is very difficult to stay up top in the loader's hatch without getting thrown around. Down inside I was having a hard time holding on to anything that would give me support. Sitting on the loader's seat with feet spread apart for directional support, my right hand was on the steel grid that protects the radios from the spent 90mm shell casings and my left hand was placed on the gun carriage. That was the best place to be. Once we broke through onto the LZ, SSG Badoyen told me to get ready. One of the prides I had in being a lowly loader, was that I knew how to

keep the coax machine gun going, and I could load the main gun so fast it sounded like a semi-automatic. I remember racing across the opening for some distance before we opened fire. I also remember soldiers of the 77th Artillery, waving and cheering as we raced around them moving northeast. We had still not opened fire and were now in the clearing. I jumped up in the loader's hatch and I could see the black grill doors of three other tanks in front of us. Once I had jumped down inside to begin loading the main gun and keep the coax from jamming, I kept thinking: "This is it, this is real combat. I wonder if an RPG will come through the front slope and kill us all? I hope SSG Badoyen has his pistol ready to keep anybody from jumping up on the tank and throwing a grenade inside. I just kept loading that main gun and keeping the slack belts feeding into the coax. I recall the empty shell casings falling on the floor and using my boot to keep them away from the turret ring. When several shell casings stack up, they can roll into the drive gear and jam it up."<sup>55</sup>



## Fatal Blows

Stunned by the unexpected armored onslaught, VC troops hesitated, unsure of what to do next. Now fighting a threat from two directions, the only logical course of action was to withdraw before being enveloped and cut off. The VC were truly between the hammer and anvil. The majority of enemy troops were caught in the open and were cut down by direct fire before they could reach the

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cover of the trees. A mechanic, aboard the A Company, 2-34 Armor tank recovery vehicle, sat calmly on top, filming the action with his home movie camera while the rest of the crew threw grenades and fired their .50 cal. machine gun at the fleeing enemy.<sup>56</sup> With the VC on the run, artillery was immediately shifted farther

east into the woodline in an attempt to kill as many enemy as possible with indirect fire.<sup>57</sup> C Company, 2-22 IN, moving through the FSB, found a VC aid station just to the north of Gold.<sup>58</sup> Tying in with 2/12 IN, the armored vehicles quickly established a firing line outside the original perimeter and consolidated their combat power preparing for a counterattack.<sup>59</sup>

Once it was established that the VC had broken contact, treatment of the wounded and policing of the battlefield began. C Company, 2/22 Infantry located the missing ambush patrol. Four of the men were dead, but one soldier had miraculously survived.<sup>60</sup> Captured enemy soldiers and documents provided a wealth of information.

With 2,500 VC soldiers participating in the attack, 647 now lay dead with another 200 believed killed and dragged away.<sup>61</sup> Friendly casualties included 31 KIAs and 187 wounded.<sup>62</sup> Due to the large numbers of enemy dead, a mass grave was scooped out by one of 2-34 Armor's M-88 recovery vehicles.<sup>63</sup> Surveying the devastation, the survivors at Gold estimated that if the armor would had arrived 15 minutes later, the VC would have overrun the base.<sup>64</sup>

LTC John Bender, the fire base commander commented, "It was just like the 10 o'clock late show on TV. The U.S. Cavalry came riding to the rescue."<sup>65</sup> MSG Andrew Hunter recalled, "They haven't made a word to describe what we thought when we saw those tanks and armored personnel carriers. It was *de-vine!*"<sup>66</sup> For their participation in the battle, the 2nd Battalion, 34th Armor was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation.

## Conclusion

The battle of FSB Gold was over but not forgotten. The VC had lost more soldiers at Suoi Tre than any other single engagement of the war. The 9th VC division, although decimated on March 21, 1967, would fight in other battles throughout the rest of the war.<sup>67</sup> Once the smoke had cleared, after-action reports of the battle immediately concluded that the use of armor had turned the tide of battle in the Americans' favor. Initially hesitant about using armor in the jungle, senior officers were beginning to rethink their tactics in favor of the use of combined arms teams whenever possible. The geography of Vietnam would pose special problems for armored forces. When properly employed, however, tanks and mechanized infantry proved be a power-



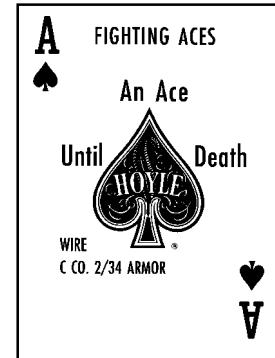


## Suoi Tre...The Aftermath

Above, an M88 digs a mass grave for the more than 600 Viet Cong casualties. A Vietnamese advisor, above right, with some of the hundreds of weapons captured.

RPGs were rarely seen until this battle. Some captured rounds are seen at left.

At right, the calling card of C Co., 2/34 Armor.



ful combat multiplier,” as was the case at Suoi Tre.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>General Donn A. Starry, *Armored Combat In Vietnam*, (Indianapolis/New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1980), p. 100.

<sup>2</sup>Harry G. Summers, *Historical Atlas of the Vietnam War*, September 1995, p. 118.

<sup>3</sup>Starry, p. 95.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 95.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 100.

<sup>6</sup>Dave Gehr account, C/3-22 Infantry, (1966-1967), <http://www.22ndinfantry.org/vietnam.htm>, downloaded 9/20/99, p. 2.

<sup>7</sup>*Time Magazine*, March 31, 1967, p. 26.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Gehr, p. 2.

<sup>10</sup>Starry, p. 100.

<sup>11</sup>Col. (Ret.) Raymond Stailey, telephone conversation, October 5, 1999.

<sup>12</sup>Starry, p. 100.

<sup>13</sup>Stailey conversation.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Dennis Hollister, XO, A/2-34 AR, 1967, correspondence to LTC Fink, Commander, 2-34 Armor, dated Aug. 5, 1997.

<sup>16</sup>Anatol Kononenko, eyewitness account, (forward observer), HHC, 2-22 Infantry, dated June 1, 1998.

<sup>17</sup>LTC (Ret.) Robert L. Hemphill, *Vietnam Magazine*, December, 1998. Feature article, “VC Onslaught at Fire Support Base Gold,” p. 22.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Starry, p. 101.

<sup>24</sup>Stailey.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Starry, p. 101.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>*Vietnam Magazine*, p. 25.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Gehr, p. 2.

<sup>33</sup>*Vietnam Magazine*, p. 26.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>Starry, p. 101.

<sup>40</sup>*Vietnam Magazine*, p. 26.

<sup>41</sup>*Time Magazine*, p. 26

<sup>42</sup>Stailey conversation.

<sup>43</sup>*Vietnam Magazine*, p. 27.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

<sup>47</sup>Stailey conversation.

<sup>48</sup>*Vietnam Magazine*, p. 27.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid.

<sup>50</sup>Hollister account.

<sup>51</sup>*Vietnam Magazine*, p. 28.

<sup>52</sup>Gehr account, p. 3.

<sup>53</sup>Kononenko account.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid.

<sup>55</sup>Gary Lapp, (loader C-25), C/2-34 AR, 1966-67 eyewitness account, correspondence dated June 21, 1999.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

<sup>57</sup>Starry, p. 101.

<sup>58</sup>*Vietnam Magazine*, p. 28.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid.

<sup>63</sup>Hollister account.

<sup>64</sup>Eric M. Bergerud, *Red Thunder Tropic Lightning*, Viking-Penguin, March 1994, p.159.

<sup>65</sup>*Tropic Lightning News*, Vol. 2, No. 13, April 3, 1967, front page article, “Reactionary Drill Saves Artillerymen.”

<sup>66</sup>Starry, p. 101.

<sup>67</sup>*Vietnam Magazine*, pp. 26-27.

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