

OPERATION HOOD RIVER

Operation HOOD RIVER was initiated immediately upon the completion of Operation MALHEUR, with the objective of continuing pressure against the enemy in Quang Ngai Province. Operation HOOD RIVER consisted of a four pronged allied attack converging on an enemy base area, believed to be the location of elements of the 1st VC Regiment of the 2d NVA Division. Beginning on 2 August, two battalions of the 2d ARVN Division conducted an overland assault from Quang Ngai; two battalions of ARVN Rangers air assaulted the high ground south of the suspected enemy base area; two battalions of the ROK Marine Brigade conducted an overland assault from the northwest; and the 2-327th and the 2-502d of the 1st Brigade air assaulted the high ground west of the base area. The 1-327th conducted search and destroy operations six miles south of the suspected enemy base area, concentrating upon likely avenues of enemy egress from it.

Terrain in the area was steep and heavily vegetated. These conditions, coupled with temperatures ranging at times above 100° F., slowed movement in the area of operations considerably. The operation, an interim assignment, lasted only eleven days and was characterized by sharp, small-unit clashes. Enemy units were encountered in platoon or smaller configurations, which often defended bunker complexes for short periods of time, apparently to allow evacuation of equipment and personnel. Frequently, brigade troops were effectively blocked by accurate sniper fire. The enemy was thus often able to evacuate base complexes before maneuver elements could flank the hostile fire.

The nature of unit activity during Operation HOOD RIVER was generally typical of much of the 1st Brigade's combat experience in Vietnam, and some examples of the actions of the 2-327th during this operation are illustrative of the work of the brigade during its odyssey. In carrying out its part of the brigade scheme of maneuver, the 2-327th based its effort upon intelligence derived from civilian officials and the order of battle section of the 2d ARVN Division. Most of this intelligence was dependent upon reports of agents operating both overt and covert collection networks within the Vietnamese population. The battalion discovered these reports to be only 50 percent reliable. Often supposed plots of unit locations were later verified to be one-half to one mile off. Although intelligence indicated that elements of the 1st VC Regiment of the 2d NVA Division were in the area, neither battalion or brigade operations as a whole produced any indication of the presence of main force units. Prisoners taken during Operation HOOD RIVER were, without exception, from local force units.

The 2-327th opened its part in the operation on 2 August with air assaults into its assigned area of operations, code named VEGHEL. Upon completion of the combat assault, each element began search and destroy operations in its

assigned zone. Sporadic contact with the enemy occurred throughout the day. Company A made the initial contact just before noon, engaging three Viet Cong, killing one. Two hours later, 200 meters west of the first contact, Company A engaged an estimated enemy platoon lodged in dug-in positions. Company A sustained two killed and five wounded before the enemy broke contact. Although the company's advance had been covered by artillery and air strikes, nothing could be found in the abandoned position but blood trails, discarded equipment, and documents.

Similar activity occurred over the next ten days. Eleven prisoners were taken, twenty-three enemy killed, and eighteen weapons captured. The 2-327th lost two killed and fifteen wounded, only three of whom had to be medically evacuated. Overall, the 1st Brigade killed sixty-three enemy in the brief operation, which was terminated on 13 August. The brigade suffered two killed and twenty wounded, most of whom were members of the 2-327th.

The following day (12 August), Company A of the 1-327th air assault
into the 2-327th area. All three maneuver battalions continued to make
sporadic contact with the enemy throughout the operation, which ended on 13
August. A tactical pattern had been reported; initial heavy contact with
the enemy followed by days of diminishing contact with local force units as
the main enemy units split into small groups, and moved away from the
battle area of operations. 815 enemy were killed, 133 weapons were captured,
and 55.2 tons of rice was confiscated. With the conclusion of operations
operations by helicopter to Chu Lai and then transported by C-119's to Duc
the for a standdown.