

**CHARLIE COMPANY,  
2/327TH BATTALION (AIRBORNE),  
1ST BDE., 101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION (SEPARATE)**

**BATTLE OF TRUNG LUONG, RVN JUNE 19-23, 1966**

**THIRD DRAFT  
By LTC. (Ret) Chuck Beegle**

On Saturday evening the 18 of June, while in stand down at Tuy Hoa north, we were alerted to return to our company areas. We knew something was up because almost without exception, every operation we started always began on Sunday. We assembled in the operations tent with Lt. WOODS, our company commander. The briefing followed that we were going north to find out how big the enemy force was that had overrun local south VN army units (poplar forces) and a Special Force's CIDG company in the vicinity of Dong Tre. There really wasn't a name to the place we were going.

Lt Woods gave us our orders and lift assignments. 1st platoon was to be lead and was to secure the LZ. After securing the LZ we were to move in trail behind 2nd and 3rd Platoons. Lt Wood would be with Hqs and heavy weapons section behind 3rd Platoon. We were also advised that the AT platoon would be our reserve. We were advised that air and artillery would be used to prep the LZ. Our primary mission was to establish control of our area and link up with A Company. A Company's LZ was east of us, approx. 3 to 5 km. We spent the rest of the evening checking our equipment and organizing our thoughts about what we were going to do and how. Everyone was in great spirits but uneasy about tomorrow.

On Sunday morning the 19th we organized for our eagle flights for pick up. We were issued our ammo and rations for 3 days and squad leaders were given their final briefings. We then moved to the far side of the airstrip to a barrier fence separating our base from Hwy 1. As we assembled, VN vendors and small children were attempting to sell items to my troopers. I started moving them back from the fence and a young girl about 12 years old looked at me and pointed north and said very clearly, "You go where beaucoup VC are, many VC, don't go". I didn't even know where for sure we were headed, but she did.

It was early, I really don't remember the exact time, when the first eagle flight of Hueys approached. My first squad and I loaded on the first chopper that landed while the rest of my platoon loaded on the other four. The whole platoon was airborne and enroute to what was to become Trung Luong(1). Our flight time seemed to take longer than expected. We were advised that the LZ was still being prepped and they slowed our approach down until it had lifted. As we approached our LZ we noticed that everything was burnt and black. Grass fires were still burning and a light grey smoke covered our LZ. There was a creek bed running east and west on our right. To our rear were dry rice fields leading up to a small rise in the distance about 300 yards from our LZ. We secured the LZ and we began to notice movement near the creek bed west side and more movement vicinity of the creek bed east of our LZ. I radioed to my CO., Lt Woods, that we needed to change our march order and direct every one to the creek bed and move east following it for cover. My fear was to be caught in the open with Charlie in the creek bed fully concealed. Lt. Woods changed the order in flight and the remaining platoons after coming into our LZ moved through us into the creek bed.

As we pulled off the LZ after Charlie Company was fully deployed, we moved to the creek bed. We immediately found the south bank of the bed covered with pungie stakes, freshly cut, and bundled commo wire running east and west through the creek bed.

Firing started almost as soon as we entered the creek bed and Lt. Whelan's platoon took the first casualty. One of his trooper was looking to the north just over the edge of the creek bed bank. The round went through his helmet exploding his head to the point that we couldn't take his helmet off. We started seeing camouflaged NVA jumping up and running in various directions. It was as if they were trying to bait us into following. We didn't. Firing was becoming more constant and heavier from the north.

2nd Platoon ran upon a battalion size cook area with the 3rd Platoon where they had killed three NVA. The

NVA soldiers were young, had on new light blue uniforms, carrying new APG'S, AK's and SKS's weapons. They all were clean shaven and had fresh haircuts under their head gear. What was surprising about this was their non concern with our presence and in view of all the air and artillery prep they remained in the area. All indications reflected we had heavy activity to our north, west and east. At this point no activity was noticed to our south. 1st Platoon continued to move down the creek bed and then moved to the high ground south side of the creek bed and found there were several small huts. As we were searching the area an NVA ran west from our position. Sgt Mahns one of my squad leaders took aim and dropped him. Firing was coming from the creek bed east of us and I was directed by Lt Woods to move down the creek and find out how far we could extend our perimeter and not be exposed to any high speed approaches. I moved with two squads and left 2 squads on the small hill. As we reached the cook area we met some of 2nd platoons troopers who said it was to dangerous to go any further. They had just killed a couple of NVA, including a sniper. I agreed but still had to find out where we could safely establish our perimeter limits. As we moved beyond the cook area, we were fired on and we engaged two NVA, killing one. The second moved into an opening into the creek bed that was running north to south. It was another high speed approach. At its entrance where the NVA disappeared it turned sharply to the right. I figured the NVA or some of his buddies were waiting somewhere behind that sharp turn. I held SP. Stepp and the others guys back and threw my helmet into the opening. It was immediately fired on. We threw grenades and fell back to the high ground. I met with Lt Woods and gave him my report on the high speed approaches to our west and now the one to our east. He called all platoon leaders and Sgt Proctor, now AT platoon Sgt., to give us our assignment to secure a perimeter around the only high ground we had. 1st platoon was given the west corner to tie in the creek bed and the south west corner of the high ground. We then would be on AT platoons right. In the creek bed we were on the left of 3rd platoon. 2nd platoon Lt. McKern was on 3rd platoons right and on AT platoons left. Lt Wood with his RTO's, and our mortar section, were in the center of the creek bed between 1st and 3rd platoons. All platoons by this time had taken casualties. Junior leaders were stepping up to take charge as some of our officers and senior NCO's were hit and being evacuated. On the hill to our north ( Hill 258) there was major enemy movement. We now started considering setting up artillery registration points.

It was early afternoon and we were digging positions clearing field of fire. Lt. Whelan and I met with Lt Dan Larned our BFO to discuss setting up pre-registered artillery targets. While we were standing looking at Hill 258 to our north, Lt. Larned was hit in the right upper shoulder and Lt. Whelan lost the heel on his boot. We took cover and the firing continued until we started calling in artillery on the Hill 258 to our north.

That afternoon we were directed to conduct patrols in and around our positions to find out what we were up against. Every effort was turned back due to heavy fire and a concern that started developing about being overrun or cut off. There just seemed to be more of them than there were of us. That night I was given the mission to set up an ambush somewhere to our west near the high speed approach coming into the creek bed. I only took 3 squads and left one on the base perimeter. We went out after dark and just after setting up realized we had heavy movement coming at us from 2 sides. I asked permission to recover from the ambush and return to the base perimeter. On approval I called in a fire mission on our ambush position and departed the area. We then fully set up in the perimeter and waited the night out. We were being shelled by 82mm mortars during our first night, we stayed awake all night waiting, but no major infiltration was attempted.

At first light on the morning of the 20th, platoon leaders were called to the CP where we were briefed on the need for us to determine just how big the enemy force was. 1st platoon and LT McKern's, 2nd platoon would move across the open area to our front (north) and move onto Hill 258 and engage what ever enemy force that was on this hill over-looking our part of the creek bed. We decided to move both platoons across on line at the same time. Artillery was called in to prep the area and then smoke was called in to cover our movement. We moved across with the smoke and got in position at the base of the hill. To our immediate front were hedge rows with short gaps of space between them. When the smoke cleared we started receiving fire from our front, from our right and from the left rear. We got up and started to move into the hedge rows and we started taking heavy casualties. Sgt Mahns was my first man to go down, 2nd platoons medic SP Martin Eastham went to him and as he was bending over him was shot in the face, killing him instantly. As he slumped over, Sgt Coughlin came to help and took a burst of several rounds that were fired from so close range that I could see the steam of his blood coming from his wounds. I then moved to my right and engaged three or four NVA, and more were coming down the hill. (They were coming through body parts, dangling guts, and broken weapons parts that decorated the area

courtesy of our air and artillery support). I then told everyone to take cover at the edge of the field where we had a slight depression behind a small dyke to take cover and requested all the air and artillery support I could get. In fact Lt. Woods put the FAC on my frequency and I then started directing the air support he was bringing in. We marked our positions with our orange panels which we laid on top of our helmets. I asked that anything above the panels be considered unfriendly. Gunships, HU-1Bravos were the first to come in and our FAC said for us to keep our heads down, not just for our protection but because we didn't want to see how many of the bad guys were coming at us. F-4s were next and then the A1-E's. We were now starting to receive heavier fire from our right rear and I asked if 3rd platoon could do anything to help us out. Bill's platoon put suppressing fire on the tree line that ran parallel to the high speed approach to our east. Once artillery started we started figuring out how to get back to our perimeter. Of Note: In the hedge rows I found that the NVA had dug in individual positions about 4 foot deep into the hedge row. They were well concealed and protected from small arms fire. I will discuss this issue later on the third day of battle.

Our plan was to disengage with the 2nd platoon pulling out first and 1st platoon last. We were to make sure everyone was recovered and we would use smoke cover from our own heavy weapons section. Once we had good smoke cover, Lt. McKern with his platoon pulled out. Once he was across I directed my squads to pull out one at a time and I would be with the last squad. We would pull back only after everyone else had gotten across. We did pull out taking two more wounded, both slightly, as we ran across the open field, I carried, Pfc. Small, one of the wounded. (Now we were all back together once more.)

That afternoon I believe Lt. Woods directed 2nd platoon to move towards A Company to link up via the creek bed. Lt. McKern ran into fortified positions and heavy small arms fire and had to return without contacting A Company. In doing so 2nd platoon left 2 squad leaders who were killed in front of fixed bunkers that had been set up to establish inter-locking cross fire in the creek bed. I was directed to move down the creek bed again to the west. We did and immediately observed several NVA with heavy camouflage run from us down the creek bed.

Instead of giving chase we called in artillery and returned to our perimeter. All during the day artillery was being fired and air support came in. Our artillery and air support had to be alternated between us and A Company. Air support was so close that some of the wounded waiting for evacuation, were wounded again from the 500lb bombs being dropped by the Air Force.

That day got even worse for all of us when we observed B Company's attempt to land on top of the hill that we had been at the bottom of. Heavy caliber green tracer fire was streaking across the top, choppers went down. Knowing what we were actually seeing, what was happening to the B Company troopers, many of us fell to the ground on our knees crying openly because there was nothing we could do to help them. B Company was not able to join us. We heard rumors that the Marines had refused to assist and the Air Cav. was coming. We were too busy trying to protect our defensive position and survive this nightmare to worry any further about who was doing what.

That night we were still being probed, shelled by their mortars and claymores were being set off. We noticed to our north all along the side of Hill 258 movement with lights. The NVA were moving around south of B Company without concern. I wasn't able to keep any LP'S out, there was just too much movement and contact. Such defensive measures were really unnecessary. We knew where they were and they had us surrounded.

That night in the middle of our perimeter we found a single NVA soldier just wandering around. He was almost taken prisoner. AT Platoon was receiving heavier probes than the rest of us. They had also encountered a couple of NVA soldiers walking around in their positions. I believe both were killed but only after they took casualties. We survived our second night with light casualties from their mortar fire. Just before dawn on the 21st, our start of the third day, it got real quiet.

We felt we had enough movement earlier that it was just too quiet. Lt. Woods was advised that we felt firing a final protective fire we could influence whatever the NVA might be doing. We did let loose with our FPF and saved our company from being overrun. Part of an NVA company was on their final phase of creeping up on the AT Platoon and 1ST platoons side of the perimeter. We opened up with two machineguns and grenades causing the NVA to continue sliding south away from our fire. AT Platoon and 1st Platoon received more casualties, but we got more of them than they did of us. We went out to sweep

our front and counted several dead NVA and recovered two prisoners.

That morning was spent cleaning up. We knew for sure that the Air Cav. was coming in to relieve us. We were used to being surrounded, but our numbers were getting low. The Cav. landed where our B Company couldn't and they came down our infamous Hill 258, picking up enemy weapons and equipment by the arm loads without being fired on. Once they came into our perimeter we heard them say they didn't think we had a problem and were wondering why they were here. Needless to say we had nothing to add to their comments because we were so happy to see them. Once we were pretty sure we had control of Hill 258

the Cav. came down, we went across again to the same place we had been two days earlier. We found some of our equipment and we found the positions the NVA had dug in the hedge rows, as I discussed earlier. The positions were on a line with each other, about 1 foot apart. There were over 40 positions on line in each of the first 4 hedgerows. Every position had at least one body in it and some had more than one. All of the bodies on top had some type of wash cloth over their face. There was no effort on their part to remove their dead or their equipment.

We later tied everyone in and sort of looked on as the Air Cav. began to move all of their equipment in with more choppers than we had ever seen. That night we felt pretty good about our position. We were hit hard by a least a company size unit. The primary point of their assault was to our south where AT Platoon was dug in. We adjusted 1st platoon's position to help cover AT Platoon moving in tighter to their front. The Cav. helped but most of the fighting was still done by C Company. We were not aware that from almost the first day we were under operational control of the First Air Cav., under the command of Hal (Gunslinger) Moore.

The Commander of the NVA unit assaulting us was captured during our sweep of the perimeter. We killed or wiped out his entire company. This fighting lasted for over 4 hours. Two less than half strength platoons against an NVA Company.

On the morning of the fourth day we were getting ready to be fully relieved but we had some things to clear up first, namely the retrieval of 2nd platoons two squad leaders. This tasks fell to the 1st platoon. On this same day I was promoted to 1st Lt. by the Commanding General of the Infantry School, who was on a battlefield tour.

In route down the creek bed we were shelled and I was wounded. We were then attacked, after repealing several NVA with no losses, my platoon Sgt. SFC Arnold moved in and 1st platoon collected the two fallen troopers from 2nd platoon. We returned to the command post and I was evacuated. with the two dead troopers which cleared the way for us to be fully relieved by the Air Cav. I was further evacuated to the 8th Field Hospital in Nha Trang. C Company was pulled out the next morning on the 5th day.

This account provided by the undersigned is attempted from memory, to recall an event that happened 38 years ago. I hope that all the troopers I served with will forgive me for not remembering their names. Their memory will always be with me. They served with honor and a steadfastness that represented the full spirit of the 101st Airborne Division and its veterans that went before us.

NO SLACK  
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