

HEADQUARTERS
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TACTICAL OPERATIONS CENTER
APO San Francisco, 96243

ASF-C

7 July 1965

SUBJECT: Dong Xoai After Action Report

MEMORANDUM FOR: Colonel John H. Spears

During the period 9-10 June an estimated regimental sized VC force attacked the Dong Xoai CIDG camp and district headquarters. (YT0876). The information in this report was obtained from interview of five USASF team members that were on site during the attack and also from observations from the new USASF Detachment which was placed on site 13 June to reorganize CIDG personnel and resume camp operations.

On 25 May a USASF "A" Detachment, a VNSF "A" Detachment and an initial CIDG force of two companies were airlanded at Dong Xoai. A third company arrived on 30 May, increasing the CIDG strength to approximately 400 men. The USASF "A" Detachment assumed the co-equal CIDG-Subsector advisor mission on 1 June. The district forces included one RF company, one armored car platoon (6 cars) and two 105 howitzers. In addition to the USASF detachment of 11 men there was also a USN Seabee construction team (9 men) at the Dong Xoai camp on 9 June (See Inclosure 1).

25 May to 5 June: The district chief's intelligence sources obtained reports of a number of VC troop sightings of less than company size forces north and east of Dong Xoai. As the intelligence buildup continued, correlated reports estimating VC troop concentrations totalling 2000 men, located five to ten kilometers north and west of Dong Xoai. Light mortar fire was received in both the district compound and the CIDG camp during this period. Crater patterns indicated the probability of registration fire. This was an active period of camp development with most of the effort directed toward building troop billets, communication facilities and weapons positions. Combat operations were limited to the employment of OP/LP's and ambush patrols within 1 - 2 km of the camp.

6-8 June: On the night of 7 June several of the outposts were probed and one round of mortar fire landed in the district compound. Clearing of an old abandoned mine field on the west side of the camp neared completion as other work on camp defenses continued. A VN CIDG company which was located 1500 meters east of the Dong Xoai camp to secure CIDG families was rotated with a Cambodian CIDG company.

9-10 June: On 9 June three USASF personnel left Dong Xoai to obtain food and supplies in Saigon. The daylight hours of 9 June passed without incident. At 091800 June a report was received by the district chief that 100 VC were located 4 km south of camp. The district chief ordered his 105 howitzer sector to fire into the area. Although there was no VC counter fire and no report of VC response to the artillery fire this action can be considered the first incident in the Dong

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Xoai battle. Between 1800 and 2330 hours the camp fired a few rounds of H&I mortar fire and USASF and CIDG guards walked along the berm areas at the outer edge of the CIDG camp. The outposts gave no indication of enemy movement in the close proximity of the CIDG camp-district headquarters complex (See Incl 1). After action investigation shows that VC troop elements had infiltrated from the north and west to within 100 meters of the camp defensive positions. At 092330 June the district chief received a report of one hundred Viet Cong on the airstrip one km west of Dong Xoai. Before he could organize his defense force and fire artillery on the VC at the airstrip the VC began intense 60mm and 81mm mortar fire in the CIDG camp and district headquarters. At this time the VC also used 57mm Recoilless Rifles and at least one 75mm Recoilless Rifle to engage point targets in the CIDG camp. Heavy mortar fire came into the camp area for about 45 minutes, while recoilless rifle fire continued throughout the duration of the attack.

At the onset of the attack USASF and Seabee personnel were split about equally between the CIDG camp and the district headquarters compound. Although these locations were only 200 meters apart this was a case of battle field isolation and can best be described by separate accounts.

District Compound: (First phase) At 092345 June the mortar attack started. Most of the rounds landed in the dependent housing area along the west side of the compound. The US personnel in the district headquarters moved initially to the south and west sides of the compound to occupy defensive positions. They were armed with individual weapons, one 3.5 Rocket Launcher and two M-79 Grenade Launchers. At about 100100 June a USASF radio operator established ground to air contact and began the adjustment of air flares. The fight from the berms around the district lasted until 100230. The US force destroyed a 30 cal LMG south of the east-west highway with a 3.5 RL and repulsed the VC from their positions along the wall until the southwest corner of the berm was taken under fire by a VC mortar. After six near misses, the VC scored a direct hit on the key bunker controlling the corner. A number of district troops were killed. At this point the Det XO withdrew all US personnel from the district compound into the district Hqs building. At the same time he sent a messenger over to the CIDG camp to tell the defenders to pull back into the district headquarters.

CIDG Compound: At 092345 June when the mortar attack started, the USASF radio operator was able to get off one (1) message by HT-1 to the radio relay at Nui Ba Den informing them of the attack. The next few rounds destroyed the building housing the communications equipment. This fire also cut the phone lines to the district headquarters, thus isolating one compound from the other. The Det commander was seriously wounded during the first few minutes of the engagement by a mortar burst and played no further part in the fight. The fighting along the berm area was violent and continuous. After the mortar attack the infantry attack pressed against the north and west sides of the camp. As one of the individuals described the attack, "They came up out of nowhere, numbering about 150 men attacking in groups of 6 to 10 men". There seemed to be some sort of task organization among the Viet Cong in the attack. There were recollections of groups, demolitions teams and flame thrower teams, wearing a distinctive garment or some part of their clothing in a common way. In one case, a breaching team that attacked the north-

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west corner of the CIDG camp were wearing a checkered cloth around their waists. All members of this team were killed (16 men). Other groups were wearing their shirts with only one arm in the sleeves and the other sleeve tied back to expose the shoulder. At about 100200 June the VC used one or two flame throwers in breaching the northwest corner and the western wall of the CIDG camp. When they got close enough to use the flame thrower on the personnel fighting from the west wall, a bugle signal came from the high ground east of camp. On this signal the infantry attack intensified behind the flame thrower and penetrated the CIDG camp. During the furious close-in fighting, following the VC assault, most of the men from the VN and Cambodian CIDG companies located in the compound split into small groups, abandoned the CIDG compound and moved into Dong Xoai village. The CIDG Cambodian company occupying positions 1500 meters east of the CIDG camp maintained unit integrity and continued a stubborn defense against a separate VC attack.

District Compound: (Second phase) At about 0230 hours 10 June, the US personnel and scattered elements of the CIDG force in the CIDG camp withdrew into the district compound through the artillery positions. At this point there were three US KIA, three US MIA and most of the remaining US personnel wounded. At 100300 June both elements were joined for the first time that night. The USASF Det XO organized the defenders to cover all approaches to the district headquarters, supervised treatment for the wounded, adjusted air strikes around and in the civil-military complex and directed the conduct of the actual fighting in the defense of the district Hqs building. Air strikes within a few yards of the district headquarters made it very difficult for the VC to assault the US-CIDG position. Air fire support by tactical aircraft and armed helicopters undoubtedly was a key factor in holding the district headquarters. At 100900 June, the district house was taken under fire by a 30 cal LMG located in a school south of the compound. The Det XO and a Seabee left the district Hqs with a 3.5 Rocket Launcher and moved to the southern berm. They fired four rounds, destroying the school house and putting the LMG out of action. On their return to the district Hqs both men were wounded by VC fire from automatic weapons within the compound. The Seabee died several hours later. At 101200 June, the VC attacked the district with 57mm Recoilless Rifle fire. At this time the US personnel withdrew from the district house to the artillery positions east of the district compound. They continued to fight from this position until they were evacuated by helicopter at 101355 June.

ARVN relief forces were landed in the Dong Xoai area on the afternoon of 10 June and at 110700 June established contact with CIDG elements which were still fighting. Two Seabees which had been wounded and separated from the US force during the action of 9-10 June were found and evacuated for treatment at 0900 hours 11 June. These two men had conducted individual evasive actions within an active battle area for a period of 30 hours.

After action casualty results show 3 USASF, 3 VNCF, 2 Seabees, 40 CIDG KIA; 8 USASF, 4 VNCF, 7 Seabees, 18 CIDG WIA, and 124 CIDG MIA. 209 CIDG defenders remained in the battle area to make contact with the ARVN relief force on 11 June. This number represents scattered elements of 75 men from the two companies which were located in the CIDG compound and 134 men of the Cambodian company (147 men) which defended the dependent families from positions 1500 meters west of the camp complex. IICTZ reports estimate ground actions and air strikes killed over 700 VC.

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Several hundred VC bodies were found within small arms range of the CIDG - District force defensive positions. ~~450~~ VC bodies were found in the two compounds.

A new USASF A Detachment was moved to camp Dong Xoai on 13 June. Additional CIDG troops and a US combat engineer platoon arrived during the following week to secure the Dong Xoai area and rebuild the CIDG camp. With the reorganization of CIDG personnel and construction of camp defenses nearing completion, the camp is expected to resume normal CIDG-Subsector operations by 15 July 1965.

1 Incl
Dong Xoai Sketch

Bill V. Holt
BILL V. HOLT
Captain, Infantry
ASO, III CTZ

LEGEND - 092345 June

(1) District Compound
 District Chief
 8 US Personnel (USASF/SEABEE)

(2) CIDG Compound
 WSR A Det
 12 USASF/SEABEE
 1 AM CIDG Co
 1 Cambodian Co

(5) Artillery Positions
 2 105 Howitzers

(7) Armored Car Positions
 1 Armored Car Platoon

(5) CIDG Dependents House Raised
 1 Cambodian CIDG Co Ground

(Perm)

MAIN ATTACK

MAIN ATTACK

Tactical Wire

DIVERSION

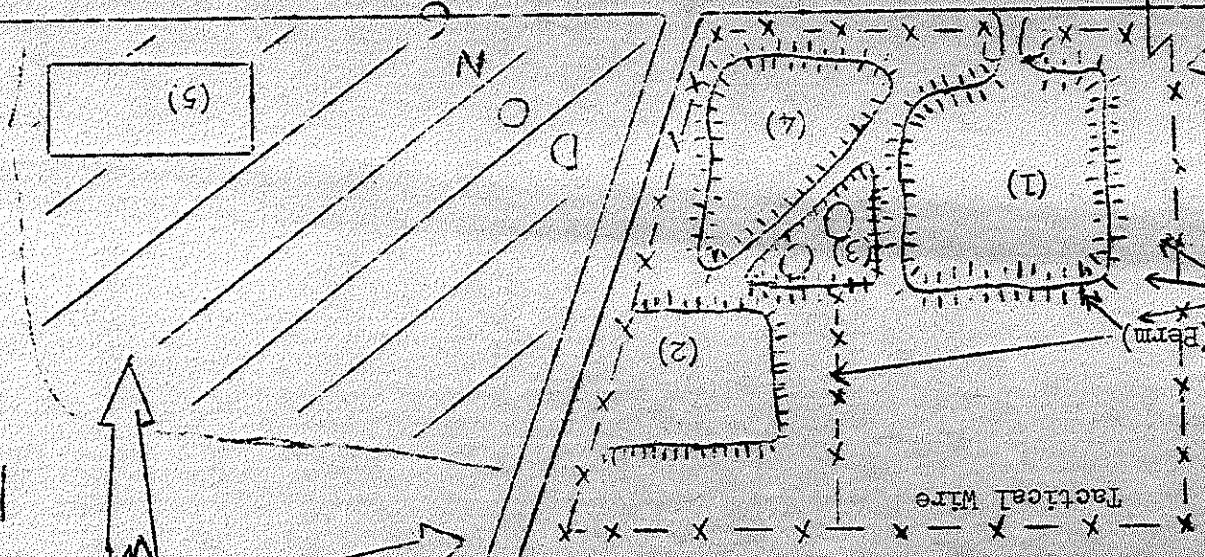
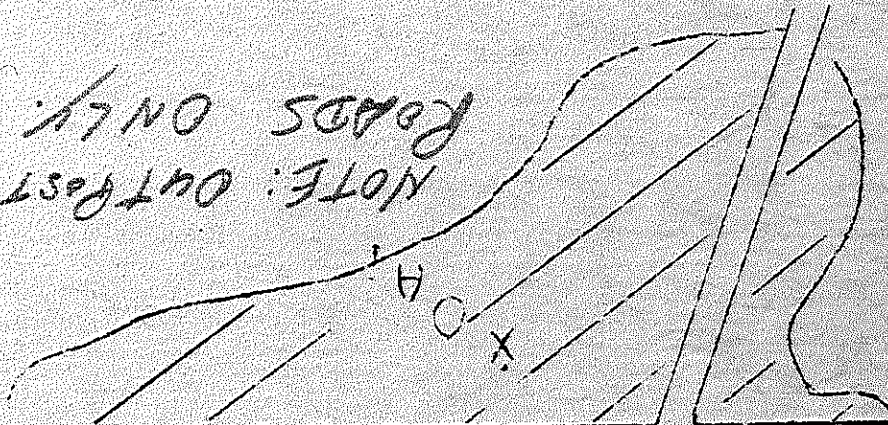
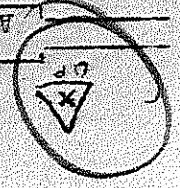
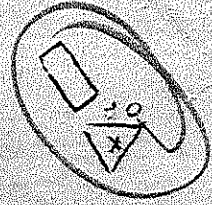
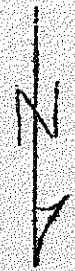
DIVERSION

AIR STRIP

School

NOTE: OUTPOST ON
 ROADS ONLY.

DON
 CHA



Legend and unit lists for the map, including 'MAIN ATTACK' directions.