

THE BATTLE OF AN BAO – MAY 5,6,7, 1968

The After Action Report for the fight at An Bao gives this sequence of events: In early May 1968 intelligence reports indicated that an enemy Regimental headquarters and an artillery unit had taken up residence in the Southwestern Crescent foothills in Binh Dinh Province. Continuing US search efforts had failed to locate enemy units, and the only significant contact was an unsuccessful night probe against LZ OLLIE on the night of 04 May. On 05 May the bulk of 1LT Dennis Hinton's "A" Company 1/50 Infantry was directed to conduct a reconnaissance-in-force toward BR895783, northwest of LZ UPLIFT. The force, 50 men mounted in 9 armored personnel carriers, departed LZ UPLIFT at 0800, moved north along Highway 1 to LZ ICHIBAN, and turned westward toward their target area. There was no direct contact during the morning hours, although an enemy element of some 15 men was sighted and taken under fire. Shortly before noon 1LT Hinton put "A" Company into a defensive perimeter for the noon break. One observation post was established for security.

At 1144 the enemy initiated action with a volley of 75mm recoilless rifle fire which immediately disabled 5 of the 9 APCs. The RR fire was followed by a ground assault coming from an area of high ground southwest of the "A" Company perimeter. Supporting enemy fires were received from the northwest, northeast, and southeast. 1LT Hinton's last order before he was shot was "Get the hell out of here", an order which led to the operational APCs withdrawing to the east with what men they could collect amidst the confusion.

Approximately 15 men had been left behind in the "A" Company perimeter. The senior person present, 1LT Frank W. Webb, reorganized these men and established a fighting position behind rice paddy dikes and oriented toward the enemy's ground assault force. Unfortunately their rear was unprotected and enemy fire from the northeast took a toll, including 1LT Webb.

Shortly after noon two relief forces were dispatched from LZ UPLIFT. The first to move out, "C" Company 1/50, was followed by two tank platoons from "B" Company 1/69 Armor. Charlie 1/50 took the same route as had Alpha 1/50 earlier, while the tanks moved further north on Highway 1 before turning toward the contact area. Charlie 1/50 arrived first, just in time to protect the remaining men of Alpha 1/50 from the enemy assault. Charlie loaded the Alpha survivors and moved out of the kill zone toward the west. Bravo 1/69 joined and the two companies established a perimeter west of the original contact area where resupply, medevac, and reorganization for a counter-attack could be completed.

At the same time, Bravo 1/50, reinforced with a tank platoon from Bravo 1/69, moved from LZ UPLIFT to LZ ICHIBAN and turned toward the contact area, approaching from the east. At 1700 Charlie 1/50 and the supporting Bravo 1/69 tanks began a counter-attack from their position to the west. As nightfall approached, the Charlie 1/50 force was directed to halt more or less in place and to establish a night defensive position, which they did.

At midnight, or shortly thereafter, Charlie 1/50 and the tankers received a badly needed munitions resupply - just in time, as it turned out, because they were taken under heavy ground attack at about 0330. Although this attack resulted in three American dead and 18 wounded, the night laager held out.

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At daybreak the two US forces resumed their move to contact ... but the enemy had withdrawn."

Sweeps of the battle area on 06 and 07 May found 117 enemy bodies; in addition, one enemy soldier surrendered on 07 May. When interrogated the POW said there had been three battalions established in a U-shaped ambush with the intention of catching and wiping out the American recon unit (Alpha 1/50).

Although the enemy was unable to achieve his objective, twenty two American soldiers were killed in the fighting on 05 and 06 May 1969. They were:

- **A Co, 1st Bn, 50th Infantry**
 - **1LT Dennis E. Hinton, Englewood, CO**
 - **1LT Frank W. Webb, Kenbridge, VA**
 - **1SG Malcolm C. Dulac, Dexter, ME**
 - **SGT James D. Ferguson, West Plains, MO**
 - **SGT Sherron E. Harbison, Flint, MI**
 - **SGT Robert J. Leska, Trumbull, CT**
 - **CPL Robert S. Allen, North Bergen, NJ**
 - **CPL Ronald A. Hillman, Texas City, TX**
 - **CPL Donald E. Lowe, Tacoma, WA**
 - **SP4 Donald R. Stephenson, Shelbyville, TN**
 - **SP4 Richard F. Wells, Little Rock, AR**
 - **PFC Bruce W. Tabor, Aurora, CO (Medic; HHC)**
- **B Co, 1st Bn, 50th Infantry**
 - **SP4 Craig A. Rood, Minneapolis, MN**
 - **SP4 Rodney A. Crandall, Detroit, MI**
- **C Co, 1st Bn, 50th Infantry**
 - **SP4 Bruce R. Backes, Titusville, NJ**
 - **CPL Cortland E. Dennison, Cave City, KY**
- **B Co, 1st Bn, 69th Armor**
 - **SSG James W. Dial, Knoxville, TN**
 - **SSG Sanford R. Gaboriault, Franklin, VT**
- **335th AHC, 268th Aviation Battalion, 17th Aviation Group**
 - **SP5 Glenn Thomas Fey, Ashley, PA**
 - **PFC Jerome Edward Jacobs, Bayonne, NJ**
 - **WO Richard Gary Lewis, Westfield, NJ**
 - **CWO Bobby Ray Williams, Spearman, TX**

The Text of the After Action Report Summary was taken from the "Virtual Wall" website. The above casualty list was edited for accuracy by Jim Sheppard, 1/50th Infantry Assn. Historian. The men who perished from the 17th Aviation Group (Helicopter shot down) were added and Company Affiliations for a few others were corrected.