

3d Battalion (Airmobile), 506th Infantry, 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile), U. S. Army.

MISSION:

1. To conduct search and clear and reconnaissance in force operations against VC and NVA forces in Binh Thuan Province and portions of Lam Dong, Binh Tuy, and Ninh Thuan Provinces.
2. To support revolutionary development within the AO in conjunction with Binh Thuan Province.

CONCEPT OF OPERATION:

Task Force 3-506 will conduct continuous small unit operations throughout the AO to locate the enemy, then fix and destroy him using reaction forces to reinforce the initial contact. Reconnaissance in force (RIF) and Bushmaster (independent ambush) operations will be emphasized during Operation MCLAIN as well as the clandestine insertion of Long Range Recon Patrols into the AO. Task Force 3-506 will maintain liaison with MACV (Sector) and ARVN Headquarters in order to reinforce, support, or react to any enemy contact made by GVN forces. Artillery and air support will be employed to support both friendly and enemy initiated contacts and will be provided in support of Binh Thuan Province.

EXECUTION:

On 31 January the Tet offensive began in Phan Thiet with a light mortar attack on the airfield and company size attacks on the city and friendly compounds. Task Force 3-506 reacted with gunships and Spooky was called in to engage targets of VC concentrations forcing VC forces to withdraw to the north and northwest of the city.

Throughout the next ten days the 3/506 and supporting units conducted search and destroy operations meeting light to heavy contact throughout the entire period. Each contact with the enemy resulted in his defeat and forced his withdrawal to the north of the city. From 10 February to 18 February the Phan Thiet area was relatively quiet with units conducting sweep operations. The enemy, having suffered nearly two hundred killed, began regrouping in previously prepared locations.


At 0055 hours, 18 February, an estimated enemy battalion launched a coordinated attack on the Vietnamese outpost in the vicinity of the soccer field, Quang Trang Camp, the ARVN artillery compound, and RF elements located at the elementary school nearby. Three VC provisional companies simultaneously attacked the city from the southwest. The VC 840th Main Force Battalion attacked the RF outpost in the vicinity of the Province prison, forcing friendly forces to withdraw. Gaining entry to the prison, the enemy released approximately 500 prisoners and impressed them into service. By 0600 the VC occupied a large portion of the northwestern section of Phan Thiet City including the Province hospital. Determined artillery strikes prevented the enemy access to the city from the southwest and forced their withdrawal from the prison by 1800.

On 19 February an attack on the Province headquarters was repulsed after heavy fighting by B Company, 3d Battalion, 506th Infantry. Sweep operations were conducted by the Task Force. Fighting was on a fierce house to house, bunker to bunker basis, but the enemy was continuously forced to withdraw with heavy casualties.

By 25 February continued search operations cleared the city of the defeated enemy and the twenty-six day battle ended with the enemy having suffered nearly fifty percent of their total force killed.

INCLOSURE 1

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PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION

AWARD OF THE PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE FOLLOWING UNIT OF THE ARMED FORCES OF THE UNITED STATES IS CONFIRMED IN ACCORDANCE WITH PARAGRAPH 194, AR 672-5-1:

THE 3D BATTALION (AIRMOBILE), 506TH INFANTRY, 101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION (AIRMOBILE), AND ASSIGNED AND ATTACHED UNITS:

HEADQUARTERS AND HEADQUARTERS COMPANY, 3D BATTALION (AIRMOBILE), 506TH INFANTRY, 101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION (AM)
A COMPANY, 3D BATTALION (AIRMOBILE), 506TH INFANTRY, 101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION (AM)
B COMPANY, 3D BATTALION (AIRMOBILE), 506TH INFANTRY, 101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION (AM)
C COMPANY, 3D BATTALION (AIRMOBILE), 506TH INFANTRY, 101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION (AM)
D BATTERY, 2D BATTALION (AIRMOBILE), 320TH ARTILLERY
B BATTERY, 5TH BATTALION, 27TH ARTILLERY
192D ASSAULT HELICOPTER COMPANY
2D PLATOON, 183D RECONNAISSANCE AIRPLANE COMPANY
TEAM 2-7, ADVISORY TEAM 37, SUB UNIT ONE, 1ST AIR NAVAL GUNFIRE LIAISON COMPANY, FLEET MARINE FORCE.
USAF TACP, 3-506 (USAF FAC), 21ST TACTICAL AIR SUPPORT SQUADRON, USAF
23D MOBILE STRIKE FORCE (MSF) COMPANY, 5TH SPECIAL FORCES GROUP, AIRBORNE
26TH MOBILE STRIKE FORCE (MSF) COMPANY, 5TH SPECIAL FORCES GROUP, AIRBORNE

THE CITATION READS AS FOLLOWS:

THE 3D BATTALION (AIRMOBILE), 506TH INFANTRY, 101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION (AIRMOBILE), DISTINGUISHED ITSELF BY EXTRAORDINARY HEROISM AGAINST A HOSTILE FORCE IN THE VICINITY OF THE CITY OF PHAN THIET, BINH THUAN PROVINCE, REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM, BETWEEN 31 JANUARY 1968 AND 25 FEBRUARY 1968. OPERATING AS A SEPARATE BATTALION TASK FORCE, UNDER THE OPERATIONAL CONTROL OF I FIELD FORCE VIETNAM. THE 3D BATTALION (AIRMOBILE), 506TH INFANTRY, COMBINED WITH THE TERRITORIAL DEFENSE FORCES OF BINH THUAN PROVINCE IN A COORDINATED EFFORT IN THE TET COUNTER-OFFENSIVE ON THE CITY OF PHAN THIET. BEGINNING AT 1018 HOURS, 31 JANUARY 1968 AND THROUGHOUT THE OFFENSIVE THE CURRAHEES ALMOST CONTINUOUSLY ENGAGED DETERMINED ENEMY FORCES IN INTENSE AND BITTER FIGHTING. DESPITE COSTLY CASUALTIES, FATIGUE, AND THE DIFFICULT OBSTACLES OF HOUSE TO HOUSE COMBAT THE RELENTLESS CURRAHEES, THROUGH TWENTY-SIX DAYS OF VICIOUS STREET FIGHTING AND TWENTY-SIX NIGHTS OF SUSTAINED FLARE-LIT BATTLES, SUCCEEDED IN FIXING AND FINALLY DESTROYING THE ENTRENCHED ENEMY POCKETS OF RESISTANCE WITHIN THE CITY AND DRIVING THEIR DECIMATED UNITS FROM THE POPULATED HAMLETS OF PHAN THIET. FLEEING THE ADVANCING CURRAHEES, THE ESTIMATED FOUR REINFORCED ENEMY BATTALIONS LEFT FOUR HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-SIX DEAD, BY COUNT, AS THE DIRECT RESULT OF ENGAGEMENTS WITH THE PARATROOPERS. TWENTY CURRAHEES HAD FALLEN IN ACTION AND ONE HUNDRED FORTY-FOUR OF THEIR COMRADES SUSTAINED WOUNDS. THE FIERCE DETERMINATION, DEVOTION TO DUTY, PROFESSIONALISM AND EXTRAORDINARY HEROISM DEMONSTRATED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE 3D BATTALION (AIRMOBILE), 506TH INFANTRY, 101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION (AIRMOBILE), ARE IN KEEPING WITH THE HIGHEST TRADITIONS OF THE MILITARY SERVICE AND REFLECT GREAT CREDIT UPON THEMSELVES AND THE ARMED FORCES OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

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SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND CASUALTIES
31 January 1968 - 25 February 1968

<u>Total Assigned</u>	<u>Task Force 3-506</u>			
	<u>KIA</u>	<u>WIA</u>	<u>MIA</u>	<u>CAP</u>
750	20	144	0	0

<u>Estimated Strength</u>	<u>Enemy Forces</u> (KIA by 3-506)			<u>CAP</u>
	<u>Body Count</u>	<u>Probable Casualties</u>		
2,515 ¹	486 ^{2*}	150		3

1 Includes 500 VC prisoners released from Binh Thuan Prison by the VC.

2 Includes 75 enemy KIA credited to the 23d and 26th Mobile Strike Force Companies.

* 1256 (C) total enemy KIA (Allied units, air, artillery, etc.).

ESTIMATED ENEMY STRENGTHS BY UNITS:

<u>UNIT</u>	<u>ESTIMATED STRENGTH</u>
840 MF Bn	450
482 LF Bn	400
KC/1500 LF Bn (Provisional)	250
485 LF Co (Combat Support)	120
430 LF Co	80
450 LF Co	90
460 LF Co	80
400 Recon Platoon	30
Ham Liem (V) Guerrillas	60
Ham Hiep (V) Guerrillas	40
Ham Kiem (V) Guerrillas	40
Ham Cuong (V) Guerrillas	50
Ham Thanh (V) Guerrillas	40
Tuy Hoa (V) Guerrillas	40
Thuan Duc (V) Guerrillas	30
Ham Phong (V) Guerrillas	30
Ham Tien (V) Guerrillas	20
Ham Thang (V) Guerrillas	30
Phu Long (V) Guerrillas	30
Phan Thiet City Arrow Action Team	20
Phu Phong (H) Arrow Action Team	25
Phu Cuong (H) Arrow Action Team	20
Phu Khanh (H) Arrow Action Team	20
Tien Loi (H) Arrow Action Team	20
TOTAL.....	2,015

(V) Village
(H) Hamlet

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INCLOSURE 4

PARTICIPATING UNITS

Part I: Units assigned and recommended for award of the Presidential Unit Citation

<u>Unit</u>	<u>Period</u>	<u>Previous US Unit Decorations and Dates</u>
1. HHC, 3d Bn (Airmobile), 506th Inf, 101st Abn Div (Airmobile)	31 Jan - 25 Feb 68	PUC 6 - 11 Jun 44 PUC 18 - 27 Dec 41
2. A Co, 3d Bn (Airmobile), 506th Inf, 101st Abn Div (Airmobile)	31 Jan - 25 Feb 68	PUC 6 - 11 Jun 44 PUC 18 - 27 Dec 44
3. B Co, 3d Bn (Airmobile), 506th Inf, 101st Abn Div (Airmobile)	31 Jan - 25 Feb 68	PUC 6 - 11 Jun 44 PUC 18 - 27 Dec 44
4. C Co, 3d Bn (Airmobile), 506th Inf, 101st Abn Div (Airmobile)	31 Jan - 25 - Feb 68	PUC 6 - 11 Jun 44 PUC 18 - 27 Dec 44

Part II: Units attached and recommended for award of the Presidential Unit Citation

<u>Unit</u>	<u>Period</u>	<u>Previous US Unit Decorations and Dates</u>
1. 192d Assault Helicopter Co	31 Jan - 25 Feb 68	NONE
2. 2d Platoon, 183d Reconnaissance Airplane Company	31 Jan - 25 Feb 68	NONE
3. D Battery, 2d Battalion (Airmobile), 320th Arty	31 Jan - 25 Feb 68	NONE
4. B Battery, 5th Battalion 27th Arty	31 Jan - 25 Feb 68	NONE
5. Team 2-7, Advisory Team 37 Sub Unit 1, 1st Air Naval Gunfire Liaison Co, Fleet Marine Force	31 Jan - 25 Feb 68	NONE
6. USAF TACP, 3-506th (USAF FAC) 21st Tactical Air Support Squadron, USAF	31 Jan - 25 Feb 68	NONE
7. 23d Mobile Strike Force Co	31 Jan - 25 Feb 68	NONE
8. 26th Mobile Strike Force Co	31 Jan - 25 Feb 68	NONE