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HEADQUARTERS  
1st Battalion, 9th Marines  
3d Marine Division (Rein) FMF  
FPO San Francisco 96602

3/RSR/jw  
603480  
24 Jul 1967  
Ser: 0029-67

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1st BN. 9th MAR  
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From: Commanding Officer  
To: Commanding General, 3d Marine Division (Rein) FMF  
Via: Commanding Officer, 9th Marine Regiment

Subj: Combat Operation After Action Report

Ref: (a) Map Vietnam: Scale 1:50,000, Series L7041; Sheets 6342I,  
6442II, 6342III, 6442IV

1. Code Name: BUFFALO
2. Date of Operation: 020900 H July 67 to 14090 H July 1967
3. Location: Quang Tri Province
4. Task Organization:

1st Battalion, 9th Marines

H&S Company (Rein)

H&S Company  
Infil, "D" Btry 2/12

Company "A" (Rein)

FO Tm, "A" Btry 2/12  
Det, H&S Co  
FAC Tm, 81mm  
FO Tm, 81mm  
Det, Med Plt  
Det, Comm Plt

Company "B" (Rein)

Company "B"  
FO Tm, "D" Btry 2/12  
Det, H&S Co  
FO Tm, 81mm  
Det, Med Plt  
Det, Comm Plt

LtCol R. J. SCHENING

Lt THOMPSON  
02 - 07 July 67  
Lt DIXON  
07 - 12 July 67

Capt SLATER  
02 - 09 July 67  
Capt RYAN  
10-14 July 67

Capt COATES  
02 July - KIA  
Capt RADCLIFFE  
02 - 09 July 67  
Capt WELLS  
10-14 July 67

1/9  
Open BUFFALO rpt

2-14 July 67

DOWNGRADED AT 3 YEAR INTERVALS;  
DECLASSIFIED AFTER 12 YEARS.  
DOD DIR 5200.10

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Company "C" (Rein)

Company "C"  
FO Tm "D" Btry 2/12  
Det, H&SCo  
FO Tm 81mm Plt  
Det, Med Plt  
Det, Comm Plt

Capt HUTCHINSON  
02 - 06 July - WIA  
2ndLt TELEP  
06 - 09 July 67  
1stLt KROHN  
09 - 10 July 67  
Capt HARTZELL  
10 - 14 July 67

Company "D" (Rein)

Company "D"  
FO Tm "D" Btry 2/12  
Det, H&SCo  
FO Tm, 81mm Plt  
Det, Med Plt  
Det, Comm Plt.

Capt SASEK  
02 - 06 July - KIA  
  
1stLt SNYDER  
07 - 09 July 67  
Capt SHAFFER  
09 - 14 July 67

5. Supporting Forces

a. Artillery. Operation BUFFALO was marked by an increase in actual physical contact with the enemy. There was a total of 49 missions fired during this 12 day operation. Due to the close contact with the enemy, many of the missions were fired close to our friendly lines. Repeated pushes by the NVA forces were stopped due to the swift and accurate artillery fire. This was particularly true during the first several days of the operation.

There was a total of 1937 rounds fired during the operation. 105 mm howitzers fired 1079 rounds of HE and 198 rounds of WE. The 4.2" mortars fired a total of 647 HE rounds, 5 illumination and 8 WE rounds. All of these rounds were fired in support of the 1st Battalion, 9th Marines. The number of kills is not known due to the destruction of records when the Command bunker was hit by enemy artillery on 7 July. This is also true of H&I information regarding number of rounds fired.

b. Air. During Operation BUFFALO air support was used extensively.

On 2 July fixed wing aircraft were employed through the use of AO's during daylight hours and into the night by utilizing flare ships. Enemy forces were kept under constant attack through the close coordination of artillery, fixed wing aircraft and HU1E gunships. The HU1E gunships played an important role in holding back enemy attacks by providing heavy suppressive fire which accounted for many NVA casualties.

Other air support action which took place on the 2nd day of July and during the period of the operation included the helo-lifting of "C" Company from Dong Ha to the vicinity of Con Thien. This lift consisted of about 135 personnel. Nearly one hundred med-evacs were completed during the short span of the operation, some of which were accomplished during the hours of darkness by the use of flares. All resupply missions for engaged companies was accomplished by helicopters.

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Fixed wing aircraft were used for the first time in single salvo runs on active NVA artillery batteries. Anti-aircraft fire was extremely heavy, destroying two aircraft and damaging four. One helicopter was damaged by small arms fire.

c. Armor. During Operation BUFFALO, the 1st Battalion, 9th Marines had a platoon of tanks and a section of M-42's attached. The tanks were employed not only in the defense of Con Thien, but also in infantry support missions. On 2 July four tanks were used to secure an LZ for Company "C" which was being helo lifted into the area of contact. They were also used in relief column moving to assist Company "B". In this movement, the 90mm guns fired canisters with their fire being directed by an airborne AO. This fire in coordination with a HUVEY gunship resulted in over 70 confirmed kills, and prevented an enemy attempt to flank Companies "B" and "C". Four RPG rounds were fired at the tanks during this encounter with only one causing any damage. This one rendered the turret of one tank immobile. Two of the tanks hit AT mines while evacuating casualties, but were able to be towed by the remaining two tanks back to Con Thien. All four were employed throughout the remainder of the operation in a defensive role at Con Thien.

6. Intelligence. During Operation BUFFALO, the 1st Battalion, 9th Marines encountered elements of the 90th Regiment, 324B Division of the North Vietnamese Regular Army. The enemy was equipped with AK-47 rifles, bolt action rifles, some with sniper scopes, they employed 82mm and 60mm mortars, RPG 7 anti-tank weapons, and 7.62mm machine guns of the Chinese Communist type 53. A majority of the dead NVA found had as many as 12 ChiCom grenades on each body. The enemy was reported to have used flame throwers, probably the Soviet ManPack Flame Thrower LPO - 50. The enemy was dressed in green uniforms, his web gear was clean and appeared to be new. Some of the enemy were observed wearing USMC flak gear and helmets, and some were carrying M-16 rifles. Virtually all of them carried gas masks. The enemy appeared to be fresh, well trained, and aggressive. Their tactics were sound and they appeared to be well led, employing artillery and mortar fire extensively.

Weather. The weather during the period 2-14 July was hot and humid. There were gusty winds during the daylight hours and at night it was cool with a slight steady breeze out of the west southwest.

7. Mission. To conduct search and destroy operations within AO, maintain security of the MSA (Route 561) in AO, and provide security for Con Thien.

8. Concept of Operation. Two companies operated outside of the perimeter of Con Thien to the west, northwest, north and northeast. One company (reinforced) H&S Company and the command group defended the Con Thien perimeter. One company remained at Dong Ha providing a reserve force as well as accomplishing administrative requirements, refurbishing and rest.

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9. Execution. Operation BUFALO began on 2 July 1967 with the 1st Battalion 9th Marines operating in and around the Con Thien defense perimeter. At this time, Companies "A" and "B" were operating independently north and northeast of Con Thien, Company "D" and "H&S" Company plus the CP group were inside the Con Thien defense perimeter with Company "C" at Dong Ha. At 020915, Company "A" detonated a booby trap resulting in 3 USMC WIA. At the same time Company "B" reported receiving small arms fire which by 1000 had become an engagement with an estimated 150 NVA. This estimate was later revised to an NVA Battalion. At this time Company "A" was directed to move to the east to link up with Company "B". The action picked up rapidly as the enemy small arms fire was supplemented by mortars and artillery. The contact was so close and occurred so quickly that friendly artillery could not be employed to support Company "B". Company "A" attempted several times to link up with Company "B" but was prevented from doing so by heavy small arms fire from all sides. At 1000, Company "C", at Dong Ha was alerted to stand by to be helo-lifted to the area of contact. In the meantime, radio contact with Company "B" indicated that the Commanding Officer, Swo Platoon Commanders, Forward Observer and Company radio operator had been killed and the FAC had taken over command. Shortly thereafter communications with him was lost. The Company XO who was with the 1st Platoon (last in order of march), behind the company command group established contact with the Battalion G. P.

At about 1200, the S-3A was directed to move to Company "C"'s LZ and assume command of the elements of Company "B". At about 1200 Company "C" was landed in the vicinity of YD133712 which had been secured by a platoon from Company "B" and a platoon of tanks. Before Company "C" could move out the LZ it received 100 rounds of mortar fire and artillery suffering 11 WIA's. Company "C" moved north from the LZ retracing Company "B"'s route of advance. At its furthest point of advance north (GS1372), "C" Company established a defense perimeter and with the assistance of the newly appointed "B" Company Commander and the Battalion S-2 commenced evacuation of Company "B"'s dead and wounded to the LZ located at GS135711. Throughout the day the LZ was subjected to heavy massed artillery and mortar fire. Casualties being moved through it were taking additional wounds and personnel in the zone were becoming casualties. At 1500 with Company "A", "C" and remains of "B", being hard pressed on all sides, the Battalion Commander notified the Regimental Commander that all assets of the Battalion were engaged and the situation looked critical. At this juncture, the Regimental Commander committed 3/9 which arrived by helicopter at 1700. On arrival of 3/9, Companies "A" and "C" became OPCON of 3/9 as directed by the Regimental Commander. The remaining elements of Company "B" and the platoon of Company "D" in the LZ were moved into Con Thien perimeter arriving there at 2045. Casualties suffered by 1/9 for 2 July 1967 were 51 USMC KIA, 166 USMC WIA, 34 USMC MIA. A search of the battlefield on 4 and 5 July to recover bodies and two weeks of dental identification produced the following

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revision to the above casualty figure: 84 USMC KIA, 166 USMC WIA, and 1 USMC MIA.

There was no reported contact on 3 July. However, during the period 3/9 July, Con Thien was subjected to sporadic enemy artillery fire receiving from 5 to 350 rounds a day. (350 on 2 July)

On 6 July the Company Commander of "C" Company was evacuated after being wounded by enemy artillery fire. Later the same day (1930) the company commander and first sergeant of Company "D" were killed by incoming artillery fire in the defense perimeter of Con Thien.

As a result of the losses suffered by both "A" and "C" companies during the preceding days of the operation and the loss of the "C" Company Commander; "A" and "C" Companies were combined under the command of Company "A"'s Commanding Officer. Shortly thereafter, the combined companies ("A" and "C") surprised an estimated 200 NVA who were caught moving across "A" Company's position. In the fighting which ensued and continued throughout the night, "A" Company was credited with 150 NVA confirmed KIA with only minor friendly casualties.

At 1345 on the 7th of July, the 1/9 CP received two rounds of heavy artillery, one of which was a direct hit on the COG bunker resulting in 11 USMC KIA, and 16 USMC WIA. This fire was estimated to be of 130mm caliber or heavier.

During the period 8 - 13 July the Battalion positions at Con Thien continued to be subjected to enemy artillery fire which inflicted 3 friendly KIA's and 35 WIA's.

On 10 July, Companies "A" and "C", returned to OPJON 1/9 and were kept outside the Con Thien defense perimeter in the southern sector as a reaction/counter-attack force.

On 13 July 1967, the daily road sweep of MSR (Route 561) uncovered one AT mine, the last such mine encountered during the period.

At 1400, 13 July, units of the 3d Battalion, 4th Marines arrived at Con Thien to effect a relief of positions with 1/9. At 1600, 13 July 1/9 chopped OPJON to 3d Marines, and assumed responsibility for the defense of Camp CARROLL.

10. Results. The termination of Operation BUFFALO at 140001 July found the below listed casualty figures:

a. Casualties sustained:

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USMC KIA - 113  
USMC WIA - 290  
USMC MIA - 1

b. Casualties Inflicted:

VC/NVA Confirmed KIA - 224  
VC/NVA Probable KIA - 141  
VC/NVA POW WIA - 1

c. Captured Materials: A large quantity of materials, weapons, grenades and C-4 were destroyed in place due to the lack of means to evacuate same, however, some captured gear was turned in by Company "A" and Company "C", then OPCON to 3/4.

11. Administrative.

a. Supply: Due to heavy losses of equipment suffered during Operation BUFFALO, Supply was called on to meet rather stiff demands. Equipment damaged or destroyed included 2 M274's, 3 Water trailers, 1 M80-109, 1 M-470, 1 M-416, 5 PRC-25's, 1 RC - 292, 1 M-60, and 2 60mm mortars. There was a shortage of utilities, canteens, and M-16 magazines, which were on an G2 priority order. Another difficulty encountered was reclaiming of casualty evacuee gear. All units on Operational assignment were issued one day Class I, Basic Allowance of Class B and complete essential Class II. Resupply was by helicopter and motor transport.

b. Maintenance: Due to the heavy dust, and higher usage of vehicles, it was evident that maintenance had to be a constant concern. Since the vehicles were driven from Dong Ha to Con Thien daily there was an abnormal increase in the mileage on all vehicles. Dust was the major problem encountered, since the higher usage rate for all equipment. A major item, the AN/TPQ-2 ground surveillance radar, was deadlined at least 90% of the time because of lack of spare parts. Approximately twenty AN/PRC-25 radios were inoperable due to lack of handsets. The majority of maintenance problems on Operation BUFFALO can be attributed to the lack of spare parts.

c. Treatment of Casualties, Evacuation, and Hospitalization:

Casualties were treated at the Con Thien outpost by the Battalion Surgeon or in the field by Corpsmen and evacuated by helicopters, if required as quickly as possible.

d. Transportation:

Motor transport and helicopters were used for non-tactical moves. With the exception of the helo-lift on 2 July all tactical moves were made on foot.

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e. Communications. Problem was discussed in a. and c. above.

f. Medical Evaluation. Nothing new or unusual to report.

12. Special Equipment and Techniques. The new search light battery was employed, not long enough to get a true evaluation.

13. Commander's Analysis. Just prior to the commencement of Operation BUFFALO, two Companies of 1/9 had been conducting sweeps to the north, and northeast of Con Thien.

The movement of Companies "A" and "B" on 2 July appeared to have tripped off prematurely an enemy build up which from all indications, and subsequent interrogation of one POW substantiated, the NVA had not wanted to make any contact at this time. The NVA were infiltrating through the DMZ massing for a large operation, possibly against Con Thien, Gio Linh or Dong Ha. Their avowed tactics of not hitting an objective unless victory is assured, confirms the presence of at least two NVA Battalions supported by numerous artillery pieces (possibly 6 to 8 batteries). These enemy forces were able, despite heavy losses, to withdraw grudgingly when 3/9 and 1/3 moved into the area to exploit the contact developed by 1/9.

The fierce action of 2 July resulting in heavy friendly casualties in a short time span, points out the need for a more efficient casualty evacuation system. Marines sorely needed to continue the action are required to help with the evacuation of personnel and material. It appears necessary to develop some method of providing litter bearers from other sources in order to alleviate this problem and keep more of the infantry elements engaged in offensive contact.

The enemy personnel exceptionally well trained and equipped holding their fire to the last minute, and making excellent use of cover and concealment. Planned artillery and mortar fire were used extensively with the enemy force moving in under their own mortar and artillery fire in the attack.

Flamethrowers were used to force Marines from positions of concealment and to channelize movement by setting fire to hedgerows. There are reports that on two occasions they called out in English, "Friendly, 2nd Platoon." Other reports had them wearing USMC helmets, flak jackets and using M-16's.

Considering the defense at Con Thien the obstacles around the perimeter consisted of a combination of double apron, triple concertina strands, and tangle foot with off-set gates. Placed within the outer wire were 25/30 55 gallon drums with a combination of napalm/gasoline (FUGASSE) detonated electrically. Each position had 2 to 3 Claymores set just behind the inner strand of wire. Enemy action against these defensive positions for the period

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consisted of artillery fire, both medium and heavy caliber with incoming fire, ranging from 5-350 rounds (2 July) per day, concluding the period with the use of heavy artillery fire in lesser number; but employing delay-type fuzes. One of these destroyed the Battalion COC bunker, penetrating approximately 5 feet of sandbags, loose dirt, and 12" X 12" timbers.

- b. No civic action was undertaken.
- c. No PsyOps were conducted.

*R. J. Schenning*  
R. J. SCHENNING

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