

1st Infantry Division

BIG RED ONE

THE BATTLE OF LOC NINH... a bloody disaster for the Viet Cong, was the largest engagement the BIG RED ONE has been in since coming to Vietnam.

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The Battle of Loc Ninh, the largest engagement the BIG RED ONE has been in since coming to Vietnam, was a bloody disaster for the Viet Cong.

"The ARVN and CIDG showed tremendous professionalism in the manner in which they fought... the 272d and 273d VC Regiments have been rendered completely ineffective," said Major General John H. Hay Jr., Commanding General of the 1st Division.

The first engagement began at 1 a.m. on October 29, when elements of the 273d VC Regiment attacked the village of Loc Ninh, overrunning portions of the perimeter and entering the village itself.

The next morning men from the 1st Division teamed up with CIDG and ARVN forces to retake the village from the VC. This proved to be difficult as the communists put up stubborn resistance in street-type fighting and used the perimeter bunkers they had taken the night before.

When the action finally broke off with the enemy fleeing, the total killed inside the peri-

meter was 92 Viet Cong.

The families in the village after it was retaken by allied forces were sent to An Loc where the BIG RED ONE provided food and clothing.

The enemy ran from the village, but their escape had been foreseen by General Hay who had set up the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry, as a blocking force.

As the enemy fled from their abortive attempt to capture Loc Ninh, they ran into the blocking force which killed 46 of the enemy.

The day after the first battle at Loc Ninh reached another fever pitch as the "Swamp Rats" of the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry, ran across a VC company south of their night defensive position (NDP) two miles west of the village.

A and D companies of the "Swamp Rats" were moving toward their NDP when they surprised the enemy. During the battle which ensued, the Viet Cong retreated to higher ground in a

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The Battle of Loc Ninh



A "Black Lion" from the 2d Battalion, 28th Infantry watches for enemy movement near the village of Loc Ninh as he takes cover in tall grass behind a berm.

rubber plantation about five miles south of the Cambodian border.

Air and artillery strikes were called and "Rebel" gunships from A Co., 1st Aviation Battalion, assisted in the fight.

October 31, the third day of the action, started as the 2d Battalion, 28th Infantry's "Black Lions" began firing harassment and interdiction mortar fire, only to have it returned an hour later.

Helicopter light fire teams, artillery and air strikes were again called in as the enemy fire decreased from heavy to sporadic. At 5:15 a.m., the command post of 2d of the 28th received word from Loc Ninh District Headquarters that waves of Viet Cong were storming across the landing strip. Artillery rained down on the air strip stopping the attackers and turning them back.

District Headquarters again called the "Black Lions" stating the enemy was scaling the walls of the outpost. This time the attack was pushed back by the highly effective ARVN soldiers manning the perimeter. In that contact, 127 VC were killed.

The fourth day at Loc Ninh began with rocket and mortar fire on the 1st of the 28th's position. Over 200 rounds were received.

Later in the afternoon, the 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry, reported making contact with the enemy. Their pointman had spotted several VC waiting in ambush and hiding in trees. The infantrymen cut loose with automatic weapons fire and killed one VC in a tree and another who was trying to escape.

A letter was found on one of the bodies which stated there was talk among his comrades that if the VC forces couldn't retake Loc Ninh, many of the VC were planning to respond to the "Chieu Hoi" (Open Arms) program.

On November 2 the VC attacked Loc Ninh with rockets and mortars followed by a fierce ground attack on the perimeter. The ARVN and CIDG soldiers met the attack head on and pushed the VC back into the jungle. A total



An ARVN soldier (above) moves to a new position as an American advisor checks for enemy activity in the village of Loc Ninh. Vietnamese soldiers (above right) from the 5th ARVN Division set up positions behind an earthen berm. Taking careful aim on the enemy is an American advisor (right). Combined Vietnamese and American forces killed over 1,000 enemy in more than a week of fighting in and around Loc Ninh.



of 238 VC were killed in this night-long battle.

At 10:30 a.m. of the same day, elements of the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry, and 2d Battalion, 28th Infantry, while conducting a patrol came across an unknown-size VC force and engaged them. The battle raged all day and at 5 p.m., contact was broken. The day-long battle left 210 communists dead.

On November 5th, after a combined total of nearly 1,000 enemy soldiers had been killed, General Hay held a news conference at the NDP of the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry. Before the gathering of over 20 correspondents representing nearly every news media in Vietnam, General Hay said, "The objective of the enemy's attack was to destroy the ARVN and CIDG forces defending Loc Ninh. The CIDG and ARVN showed tremendous professionalism in the manner in which they fought."

