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**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY**  
**UNITED STATES ARMY ROTC INSTRUCTOR GROUP**  
**THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**2121 TUTTLE PARK PLACE**  
**COLUMBUS, OHIO 43210**

*1/4 Col*  
*6*

IN REPLY REFER TO:

11 April 1973

SUBJECT: Monograph

Commanding General  
U.S. Army Armor School  
ATTN: AT SAR-CD-DD  
Ft. Knox, Kentucky 40121

1. Basic letter complied with.
2. I have made some comments on the proposed monograph. In addition, I've inclosed a monograph, which I hope may be of some further help, that I wrote in 1967 while attending the Infantry Advanced Course at Fort Benning.
3. If any details are still unclear, please contact me at Area Code 614-422-4440.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "D. S. Kelly".

1 Incl  
as

DAVID S. KELLY  
Major, Armor  
Assistant Professor of Military  
Science

**PATTON MUSEUM**  
**OF CAVALRY AND ARMOR**  
**P O BOX 208**  
**FORT KNOX KY 40121-0208**

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ATSAR-CD-DD

Major David S. Kelly  
US Army ROTC Instructor Group  
Ohio State University  
Columbus, Ohio 43210

Dear Major Kelly:

I have been asked by General Abrams to prepare a monograph on the role that Armor, Armored Cavalry, Air Cavalry, and, in conjunction with the Infantry School, Mechanized Infantry played in Vietnam. Its purpose is to document those events in which we learned significant lessons or made major strides in the development of tactics and techniques. Equally important is the telling of the story of Armor in the Vietnam conflict.

Among the events being considered for inclosure in the monograph is one involving Troop B, 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry in the Battle of Minh Thanh Road on 9 July 1966. It is my understanding that you were the troop commander at that time.

The inclosed draft narratives were prepared using, as sources, the Operational Report Lessons Learned, Headquarters, 1st Infantry Division, 1 May to 31 July 1966; the Combat Operation After Action Report, Operation El Paso II, III, Headquarters, 1st Infantry Division; and notes from a 14 September 1967 US Army, Vietnam Meeting Engagement Seminar. As you know these reports are lacking in many of the details necessary to tell the complete story.

For this reason, I ask you to read the draft narratives and make any additions or corrections you think necessary directly on the pages, or on separate paper if you prefer. Of particular interest to my researchers are those questions asked in the editor's notes. Any sketch maps you may be able to make of platoon and vehicle deployment will also be of assistance.

When you have completed your review, please return the material and your comments in the inclosed self-addressed envelope.

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ATSAR-CD-DD  
Major David S. Kelly

Thank you for your assistance. Be assured that any contribution you can make is appreciated.

Sincerely,

1 Incl  
Draft Narrative w/one map  
- Battle of Minh Thanh Road

WILLIAM R. DESOBRY  
Major General, USA  
Commandant

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#16-1

Activities of 1/4th Cav (Continued)

Battle of Minh Thanh Road

9 Jul 66

The Battle of Minh Thanh Road was the third battle of Operation El Paso in which the 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry played a major role. This particular action is significant in two respects: first, the planning prior to the operation and second, the operation came as a result of US initiatives in seeking contact.

Based on the previous successes of the 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry against elements of the 9th VC Division and a continued desire of the enemy to gain a victory over an armored column, the Commanding General, 1st Infantry Division, MG William E. DePuy assigned the 1st Brigade Commander, COL Sidney B. Berry, Jr. the mission of developing a plan to lure the VC into attacking US forces again. COL Berry issued an order to the Brigade with the mission:

"To position forces and conduct reconnaissance in force to lure forces to ambush/attack the column, enabling the 1st Brigade to destroy VC forces by offensive action."

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The operation, given the name Operation Olympia/El Paso, was a multi-phase plan in concept, easily modified to insure response to attacks on either the Minh Thanh Road or Highway QL 13 south of An Loc. During the planning, in which all commanders participated, extensive reconnaissance of the operational area and "wargaming" of enemy actions and reactions was conducted. Intelligence pinpointed five possible sites along the Minh Thanh Road where an attack could take place. As it turned out, the site selected as the most likely was the site of the actual attack.

To increase the probability of luring the enemy into contact, word was leaked of a move by engineer bulldozer and supply trucks escorted by a small amount of armored cavalry from Minh Thanh to An Loc. (Ed Note: Details of how this was accomplished are non-existent.)

On 7 July, the 1st Brigade began repositioning forces to react to any enemy attack. The 2d Battalion, 2d Infantry moved to Minh Thanh joining the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry and one battery of artillery. The 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry occupied positions near an artillery base seven kilometers to the north of the Minh Thanh Road. The 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry moved to Quan Loi. This gave the brigade four infantry battalions, alerted and standing by to seal in any attacking enemy force. Landing zones throughout the area were identified and plotted giving the operation a large degree of flexibility.

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At 0700 hours, Task Force Dragoon consisting of Troops B and C, 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry and Company B, 1st Battalion, 2d Infantry under the command of LTC Leonard L. Lewane moved out from the An Loc airfield to conduct a reconnaissance in force south on Highway QL 13, then west on Highway 245, the Minh Thanh Road. The column, with Troop C under CPT Stephen Slattery leading, Troop B under CPT David Kelly following, and the members of Company B integrated with the two troops, halted at the road junction of Highways QL 13 and 245. About 0900 hours, when the morning fog and overcast had lifted sufficiently to permit air support, LTC Lewane, flying overhead, gave the order and the task force, Troop C still in the lead, started down the Minh Thanh Road. The tactical formation used by CPT Slattery was two platoons flanking the road on either side, with the troop command group and a third platoon following. In places the thickness of the underbrush and secondary jungle growth forced the troop to assume a column formation on the road.

The troop conducted reconnaissance by fire as it moved, but no fire was returned and no enemy activity was sighted. Artillery fired pre-planned concentrations just ahead of the troop and to the sides of the road, moving as the troop moved. Armed helicopters also conducted reconnaissance by fire on both sides of the road and the aerial scouts of Troop D flew ahead and to the flanks of the column to detect any VC activity.

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The bridge at XT 694751 had been designated Check Point Dick. Troop C halted short of this point and directed artillery and air strikes in the area immediately adjacent to the bridge. One platoon moved to secure the bridge and searched for mines and demolitions. The remainder of the column then crossed and began to move, again in a column formation because of the terrain and a need to speed up the operation.

The column continued without incident until it reached a point approximately at XT 680744. There LT Jack Lyons, in command of the lead platoon, reported he had taken under fire two separate groups of VC crossing the road from north to south. At this point the platoon began to receive small arms and then automatic weapons fire. The firing spread quickly until by 1115 hours the entire column was receiving heavy automatic weapons, recoilless rifle, mortar and small arms fire.

The 272d VC Main Force Regiment was deployed in a 1000 meter long ambush with the heaviest concentration of forces to the north. The enemy had prepared well camouflaged foxholes with overhead cover in the ditch along the road. (Ed Note: north, south or both sides?) These positions were initially unoccupied. The enemy retained the bulk of his force back from the road until contact was eminent. The VC camouflage and fire discipline was excellent. The air and artillery fires, reconnaissance by fire, and continuous aerial surveillance were ineffective in causing the enemy to reveal his presence until the column was within the ambush.

As the attack started LTC Lewane requested a determination of the direction of the main attack. As CPT Slattery compressed his troop, and Troop B moved up to join him, all vehicles began to return fire. In the initial confusion of incoming fire, maneuvering vehicles, and reports of additional VC moving across the road from north to south an initial determination was made of the south side of the road containing the bulk of the enemy force. As more accurate reports from the people on the ground and aerial observers began to come in, the initial mistake was recognized and artillery support concentrated in the area to the north. The delay in making an early and accurate determination was probably the most critical time of the battle because of its influence on springing the reaction forces. (Ed Note: This sentence is a quote from COAAR - Did reaction forces deploy toward wrong area? Did they wait until confusion cleared? Details unclear.)

The infantry battalions had been standing by and on the cavalry's contact began to deploy in response to COL Berry's orders. The 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry at Minh Thanh began to move toward the ambush site as the Battlefield Assault Force. Minutes later the 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry, began to helilift to a point north of Check Point Dick. From there they were to attack west, then south to engage the enemy force. The 2d Battalion, 2d Infantry, from its position at Minh Thanh, was to move on foot to a position south of the ambush site and be prepared to attack north on order. The 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry was alerted for future movement. The plan was later modified to move 2d Battalion, 2d Infantry by helicopter rather than by foot.

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Fire against the cavalry column continued to be heavy and LTC Lewane continued to direct air strikes in the area north of the road. As the 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry began to arrive in the battle area, LTC Lewane assumed operational control by direction of COL Berry and enemy fire began to slacken. (Ed Note: Details of fighting within the cavalry formation are scarce. Details of fire support coordination lacking.)

COL Berry ordered the 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry to helilift into a position directly north of the ambush site in an attempt to cut off the VC withdrawal which began about 1330. Aerial observers reported large groups of VC moving to the northwest away from the ambush site. These groups were struck with air and artillery support and COL Berry maneuvered his battalions through the heavy jungle undergrowth north and west of the ambush site striking at the fleeing enemy.

Once contact was broken in the ambush site, about 1330 hours, the cavalry moved back to Check Point Dick to resupply ammunition and then to establish a blocking position, in conjunction with a Vietnamese cavalry unit which had joined them, along the road. (Ed Note: Had both troops stayed in the formation? Any attempt to evacuate wounded or resupply prior to this? Actions in blocking positions?)

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Operation Olympia/El Paso continued with US forces remaining in the area for two more days making sporadic contact with small groups of fleeing VC and searching the battlefield. Evidence of the severity of the defeat inflicted on the 272d VC Regiment consisted of 239 enemy dead found in the area with another 300 estimated killed, 8 VC prisoners taken, and 41 individual and 13 crew served weapons captured.

Casualties to Task Force Dragoon were (Ed Note: unknown at this time.) and 4 armored personnel carriers destroyed, one tank destroyed and three other personnel carriers damaged.

Operation Olympia/El Paso had achieved its objective: a major enemy force had been lured into attacking at a time and place chosen by the 1st Infantry Division and that force was decisively defeated. One of the significant contributing factors to this success was the combination of thorough and deliberate planning with violent execution. The detailed planning conducted with all commanders gave to each a knowledge of what others would or were capable of doing. The flexibility gained from prepositioned forces and preselected landing zones throughout the expected battle area was instrumental in the rapid reaction. The violent execution was provided by the cavalry column with its armored vehicles and massive firepower and the continuous, responsive fire support of air and artillery.

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