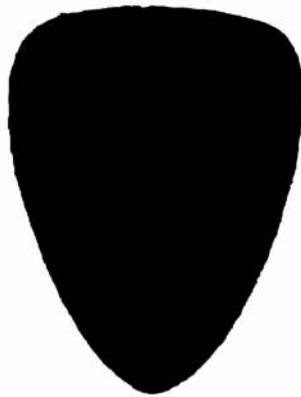


**1<sup>ST</sup>**

**CAVALRY DIVISION  
(AIRMOBILE)**



COMBAT OPERATIONS  
AFTER ACTION REPORT

**PLEIKU  
CAMPAIGN**

PLEIKU PROVINCE  
REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM  
23 OCT - 26 NOV 1965

HEADQUARTERS 1ST CAVALRY DIVISION (AIRMOBILE)  
Office of the Commanding General  
APO San Francisco 96490

FOREWARD

This report summarizes the operations of the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), (short title, 1st Air Cav) in the period from 23 October to 25 November 1965. These operations occurred as phases in which varying proportions of the total division's strength was brought to bear under various command arrangements. But the phases make an integral whole that may correctly be called a campaign. Certainly these operations meet these criteria of a campaign: in duration, (over a month); in size of the area of operations (40X50KM); and in the forces involved (all elements of the 1st Cav, and up to 5 bns of A-R-V-N, at various times plus very substantial additional supporting forces, A-R-V-N, U-S-A-F and US Army). The enemy forces were three regiments operating under control of a N-V-A FIELD FRONT or division, plus other V-C combat and supporting forces. This campaign included some important firsts.

For the first time, following the relief of a besieged Special Forces Camp, there was an immediate, prolonged, relentless pursuit of the enemy. For the first time a large unit operated continuously over difficult terrain, devoid of roads, and relying primarily on aircraft in every aspect of its operations, to include logistic support. For example, it was the first time tube artillery was employed in such terrain. The CH-47's made it possible both to position the artillery units and to supply them. This permitted the infantry units almost always (and the units of the Cavalry Squadron on occasion) to have tube artillery, as well as aerial rocket artillery, in support of their ground operations in a roadless, rugged region.

For the first time in the war an American unit gained contact with the enemy and maintained it over a prolonged period. This produced many important results, one of the most important of which was the generation of solid intelligence based on such tangibles as actual contact with and sightings of the enemy, prisoner interrogations, and captured documents. The resulting intelligence was of great tactical value to the 1st Air Cav; also it multiplied our firepower advantage and focused our maneuver. It permitted higher headquarters to fill many gaps in strategic intelligence.

For the first time large American units met and defeated large N-V-A units fighting as battalions and regiments under divisional control.

These operations were conducted throughout in close coordination with the US Air Force, through the Division Air LNO, and made extensive use of Air Force capabilities in the roles of reconnaissance, logistical support, and fire power support which included many B-52 strikes and interdiction strikes as well as the more normal close support. The accuracy of our acquired intelligence enabled the interdiction strikes to achieve a high degree of success as evidenced by many secondary explosions or other indications that the strikes had hit "pay dirt".

Extensive and successful use was made of psychological warfare based on a "grass roots" approach. Basic information (on actual enemy situation and the condition of his men) was converted into leaflets and loudspeaker tapes - for example, voices of actual captured N-V-A men and officers were broadcast in enemy held areas. Many enemy dead and captured carried our leaflets and safe conduct passes and a gratifying number surrendered using our passes.

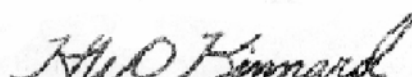
Of necessity we engaged in extensive "combat" civic action in caring for all the immediate wants of the many refugees who chose to abandon their homes in areas which had been V-C controlled (and probably would be again when we left) and to move to areas under government protection. We filled the breach by supplying food, clothes and other essentials until U-S-O-M and other agencies could take over. We also evacuated these refugees using our organic aircraft.

Throughout the campaign we worked closely and effectively with various A-R-V-N units and headquarters. In addition to working with the elements of 24th Special Zone, during the relief of PLEI ME, and with the Airborne Brigade, in the fourth phase, we continually liaised with and used forces from the C-I-D-G Camps in our area. For example, a platoon from the camp at DUC GO was part of the force which staged the ambush on the IA DRANG on the night of 3-4 November. Our ability to work closely with the A-R-V-N was enhanced by establishing a division tactical C-P, co-located with the A-R-V-N II Corps Headquarters in PLEIKU. Besides simply cooperating with the A-R-V-N forces, I believe we enhanced their professional capabilities in many ways such as the techniques of employing artillery support. I feel that a boost in their morale resulted from their increased abilities and that their confidence was bolstered by seeing our power as it was applied to the enemy.

If the A-R-V-N morale was improved, I believe that N-V-A morale was severely shaken. This is borne out by information from captives and ralliers and from the fact that N-V-A units have avoided contact with us in this area on subsequent operations.

Besides the other firsts, this campaign was the first real test, not only of the "First Team", as a unit, but of the airmobile concept in combat. I believe that both the division and the concept came through with flying colors. The division learned much that has been applied since the campaign. We learned that certain changes are still in order to improve the TO&E of an airmobile division. We learned lessons that will result in improved techniques and tactics. But overall every member of the "First Team" is proud of his actions and accomplishments in the PLEIKU Campaign.

This campaign and its results would have been important at any stage of any war, but in the context of the situation that existed in Vietnam at the time of this campaign the results are believed to be of major military and, perhaps, even international importance.

  
HARRY W. O. KINNARD  
Major General, USA  
Commanding

# COMBAT OPERATIONS AFTER ACTION REPORT FOR PLEIKU CAMPAIGN

## Table of Contents

	Page
Foreward	
Table of Contents	i
1. Introduction	1
2. Task Organization	1
3. Supporting Forces	3
4. Intelligence	10
5. Mission	15
6. Concept of Operations	16
7. Execution	17
a. Beginning of Relief of PLEI ME	18
b. Operation West of PLEI ME	33
c. Capture of N-V-A Hospital	45
d. DRANG River Ambush	51
e. Battle at CHU PONG (LZ X-Ray)	84
f. Battle at LZ Albany	93
8. Results	122
9. Statistical Analysis of Results	124
10. Administrative Matters	125
11. Special Equipment and Techniques	127
12. Advisor/Commander Analysis	130
13. Summary	132